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THE  
AGENT OF BROOME WARREN.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.  
VOL. III.



LONDON:  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,  
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.  
1871.

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250. 73. 232.



# THE AGENT OF BROOME WARREN.

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## CHAPTER I.

CROWLEY had ridden direct from Goldsworthy to his friend Tom, with whom he was in long and interesting discussion of recent adventures till long after the commotion at the Rosary, of which Tom, having reached home so late on the previous night, was as ignorant as himself. The afternoon was advanced when they set out to the scene of Mr. Cheek's reception, which had been correctly timed by enquiries in London; and then they first learnt how far the preparations exceeded expectation, and how threatening they looked. The assemblage of so many strangers, all of the labouring classes, and from no one knew where, outnumbered the Broome Warren dependents by more than ten times, and no one knew what brought them. Great distress for employment and food was common in all directions, and bands of hundreds had marched from one place to another to obtain them, but they



were too many to be either employed or fed in obscure parishes which had already their complement of necessities. Whilst we notice the singularity, we feel bound to add that they appeared to have no thought of plunder, though it is not to be denied that they did smash a certain quantity of machinery which had very much lessened the want of hands. The incursion so far out of more frequented roads being little understood, formed some excuse for astonished ratepayers to find fault with more than Mrs. Toogood for a too attractive practice of liberality, though expostulations could only have been very partially called for, and many an excellent lady was no more blameable than the witch of other days, who had the misfortune to be responsible for the murrain amongst the cattle.

Nevertheless, there was a prospect of rough play, and not much prospect of its being very discriminative, and there was no prospect at all of any effectual restraint. The yeomanry were only formidable enough to excite provocation, though they were drawn up with great military skill before the opening of Cheek's lane, to secure a safe retreat. The specials were equally provident on the side of the green next to the village, with one foot ready for an onset, and the other for a run, whilst the enemy were roaring defiance and laughter, and warning both forces to keep their distance by flourishing their cudgels and quart pots.

As Crowley and Tom made their way to that part of the green where Cheek would enter on his new

dominions, they saw nothing but a disposition to good-humour, though they doubted whether it was not too good, and rather trembled for so much hilarity. They were not long kept in suspense—a high wind swept the road in the direction from the railway-station at which the new squire was to harness a splendid carriage and four, which he was said to have purchased in one lot of a job-master, that he might make his *entrée* in becoming equipage. First came a cloud of dust, like the hurricane of a battle-field; then was heard the rapid roll of wheels and the crack of postillions' whips; and then dashed along an open barouche and four smoking gallopers, with job-master's liveries in the rumble and a solitary *magnifico* inside, reclining in scarlet and tiger-skins. It was, indeed, Christopher Cheek, Esquire—the monarch of all he surveyed! As he whirled past, he honoured his amazed admirers with a haughty stare, which meant to say, "What do you think of me now?" But, of course, he could stoop to no recognition, and diminished down the road at a rate which threatened every wheel, spring, knee, and neck of the stupendous turn-out!

But what was the welcome? We have since those days heard a monster bravura at the Crystal Palace, which was very stunning; and have witnessed Easter Monday at Epping, which was very dangerous; and have likewise bobbed our heads at Wimbledon, which was, perhaps, very lucky: but such wild howls, and such a frantic chase, and such a deadly precision of missiles as those which enlivened

Mr. Cheek's cavalcade, never frightened us before. Happy is the fact that curses cannot kill, that four legs are faster than two, that nest-eggs have not the range of rifles, or Squire Cheek's history must have ended in a monument on Goose Green.

As he turned round over the bridge, with the two near wheels grazing the parapet, and the two off ones spinning in the air; and, at every sharp angle and inequality of the road—wherever there was a safe place of ambush for his friends of the Rokins' light-infantry to pour in a close broadside, or follow him, or meet him with a raking volley, or frighten his plungers upright with frying-pans and cow-horns, and the screams of Mrs. Crimp's "virtuous young women"—there was a fresh volume of skirmishers, till he vanished through the lodge-entrance of the Chase with marks of admiration enough in his person and panels to satisfy the most craving ambition.

It was a great commotion, but it was not over yet; for the sport had been too short to repay the long waiting for it, and the public spirit was warmed up for something more. It cast its eyes upon Captain Drinkwater and the specials, who were there to keep them in order. Mobs, with their blood up, seldom like to be kept in order; and so, from casting their eyes, they proceeded to cast their remaining stores of ammunition. The attack being kept up some time, the Captain waxed valiant, and threatened a charge; which, being answered with roars of laughter, his dignity compelled him to face

about and give the word. But the mob stood its ground ; and, though the prudent officer gave it full time for a run, prepared, in military phrase, "to receive cavalry." In the onset, the leader's charger had the mishap to receive a turnip on his muzzle, and, shying sharply round, dashed through his followers with a determination which nothing could restrain, though the rider was too experienced a horseman to be canted off, so long as he had a spur to hang by. The Force was too brave to desert their commander under any circumstances, and so they followed him, full-speed, to the farthest end of Goose Green, where they again took up position and returned the huzzas of defiance. The Specials, at the same time, retreated upon the public-house ; and, all being out of range of the enemy, a dispatch was sent, at utmost speed, for reinforcements, to a recruiting-sergeant in the next village, and hostilities were suspended. Mob, satisfied with its glory, huzzaed and got drunk till it grew dark, and then resolved to make an uproarious night of it.

Being unwilling to leave his aunt during a night of perhaps alarming riot, Crowley sent a messenger to say he should go to the Rosary to sleep, and rode home with Tom to put up his horse and dine. But he had promised to return to Goldsworthy, and it was necessary to send another messenger there to account for his absence. For this office, Tom seemed to be inclined himself, as it was long since he had seen pretty Polly, and he thought nobody could do it so well. It was, therefore, soon agreed that he

should take advantage of the opportunity, provided he allowed Crowley to bear him company on foot over some distance of rough ground which interrupted a short cut to the public road; for it had now become very dark, and somewhat hazardous for a horseman.

After a long stoppage they set out, Crowley walking in advance to feel the way and take the first chance of the stumbles, and neither of them very apprehensive for his bones, of which their hunting habits had left them small consideration. Other persons might, perhaps, have thought of other dangers in such a night and such a state of the country; and, whilst we are writing these lines by a safe fireside in the very forest we are describing, and with just such another night howling outside the window, we think it highly probable we should have been of the party.

## CHAPTER II.

**WE** are sensible of having too long neglected Mrs. Bloomer, and must now report what had occurred during her period of eclipse.

Jim Crow's convalescence, we are concerned to say, was retarded almost as much as the Vicar's, and was the cause of more anxiety, inasmuch as the wives of his bosom took much after the example of Mrs. Bloomer herself, and were in the habit of shifting their perch and hopping after every handsome young stranger that enlivened their vicinity. Indignant at this lax behaviour, and conscious that most of the cottagers on the Green would, in another year, make as good a display as herself at the Poultry Show, Mrs. Bloomer had set forth, one dark night, to beat the bushes for Mr. Crow's erring establishment, and bring them home upside down by their contumacious heels.

The search had led her some distance, but all to no purpose till she found herself in the confines of Mr. Cheek's orchard. Here she thought she would make a scrutiny amongst the apple-trees, and passed

from one to another until she came to the verge of the farm-yard. Perhaps the ill-conducted harem might have gone to a party there, and arranged to pass the night upon the cribs and haystacks; and so into the yard she plunged, without pausing to consider whether there was any bottom to it. Finding a very good one not more than knee deep, she was proceeding onward when her progress was arrested by a light which streamed through a chink in the barn. What could it be, so late at night? It was not the light of any one on a search like her own, for it was quite stationary; it could not have been left by accident, for Mr. Cheek was too careful of his property—unless, indeed, he had left it to set the place on fire, and come upon the Insurance Office—he was quite bad enough. The entrance door was round a corner, and she could take a peep through the chink in her front without fear of detection. There was something in that last word which roused up all her animosities. If she could only catch Cheek in a felony, would she not make him remember it!

Having, previous to her plunge, turned the lower extremity of her dress through her pocket holes, she was not long in wading to the glimmer, to which she stooped with a rather comical liberality of exhibition to those who might have chanced to stand behind. What did she see?

On the floor of the barn, which was strewed with chaff and rubbish, and had been roughly patched from time to time, as the rats' holes made

it necessary, sat Mr. Cheek at a distance of four or five yards from her. His legs were stretched out, and between them was a tin box; like the cases in which lawyers keep their deeds, which brightly reflected the light of a dull tallow candle on one side, also gleaming on a strong wrenching iron on the other. He was intent upon the examination of several papers, and debating with himself whether he should destroy or preserve them.

"Humph! Dangerous!" he muttered. "But may be useful some day." With which he carefully replaced them in the box, and took out others, over which he glanced; pausing over them with the same doubtful shake of the head, and ending by restoring them to their places.

"Nobody will think of looking for them here," he again growled, locking the box, and on his hands and knees, sweeping a clear space upon the boards. He had next recourse to his wrenching iron; and, inserting it under a short plank or two, forced them up with as little noise as possible, and dug out as much rubbish as would leave accommodation for the insertion of his treasure; which he then consigned to earth with as much care as he would have bestowed on the coffin of a dear friend, whose repose might be menaced by resurrection men. Having done this to his mind, he replaced the boards and pushed the nails down in their old sockets, without the noisy aid of a hammer. After which, he rose to his feet and looked suspiciously around him, as if he feared the motions of his own black shadow, and



kicked about the chaff and removed the surplus earth till no trace of his operations was distinguishable. He then took his candle in one hand and his wrench in the other, and moved to the door; before opening which, he extinguished the light, and Mrs. Bloomer saw no more. It was enough she thought for a beginning. She had detected her enemy in something nefarious; and, though as yet she knew not what it was, she had a strong opinion that he had best take care of himself.

We have nothing more particular to relate of her till the day of Cheek's grand return, except that she found a point in her own ground from which there was a good view of the barn without incurring a repetition of her late hazards. Night after night she had been punctual to her post, and no light had been seen, but the exhumation of the tin box must, she knew, take place some time or other, and the chief object of her life was to make one at the ceremony.

So engrossed was the uncomfortable nature of Mrs. Bloomer on this subject that she had not leisure to be alarmed at the threatening demonstration on the green. It was the preparation for Mr. Cheek; and she felt convinced that, having now become the mighty man of the village, he would cease to reside at his farm, and that one of the first things for removal would be his secreted treasure. Before he thundered past the Vicarage she had spent many restless hours on the look out; and being gratified by the sight of him, her impatience increased with

the advance of night, which cheered her with a lowering look and a bustle amongst the clouds indicative of much less danger in approaching her chink. In this fidget she continued till she could distinguish nothing but the tops of the elm trees, which had begun to swing their limbs about with much violence, and hear nothing else but the wild cries of the invisible crowds in various quarters, mingled with the cracked church bells, which 'Cheek had sent half-a-crown's worth of his labourers to swing out of their senses, sometimes in whispers and sometimes in exclamations, to the great discomposure of the rooks and jackdaws. Captain Drinkwater's word of command had long been silent, for he and his bold dragoons had, of course, clanked away to supper, under the very sensible conviction that when they could not see the enemy it was of no use to look for him; and the specials were probably gone also, for who could see sense in running risks when they could not see to run away?

It was about ten o'clock when Mrs. Bloomer, who had been constantly changing her station from the front to the back of her premises, each of which was bounded by a pathway, was shivering in the cold blast by the hedge which divided her from the fields. For a long time she shivered without any event to quicken her warmer currents; but, at last, a momentary lull of the gust enabled her to distinguish a heavy footstep approaching in a direct line from the Chase to the farm. It was very near before she heard it; and in another second it passed

close under her eyes, with nothing but the hedge between. Her eyes, however, were of no use to her, for it was too dark to see her hand. It was Cheek, no doubt, and she stole after him to her old lookout, where she panted for some minutes, like some Broome Warren innocent in expectation of her first rendezvous; and then once more streamed the thin red ray through the weather-worn boards! Her perseverance was going to be rewarded! And through the gap she went into the low orchard, feeling the apple-trees till her nails scratched against the broken paling of the farm-yard. This was small impediment, for we are speaking of a happy time before the revival of crinoline or train, and Mrs. Bloomer's chicken hunting evolutions had made her as active as a cat. And now she fairly stood in the enemy's camp, with a full knowledge of the penalties of a spy; but with too much mischief in view to dread their infliction.

Taking her old station, there she saw the lord of Broome Warren looking warily about him, leaning on his crowbar with one hand, and sailing his tallow candle up and down, and round and round him, to see if any rat, cat, or other intruder was looking at him. He was accoutred very differently from his fashion of former days, and, as he judged, comfortably to his present position. His overcoat was trimmed with velvet, and lined with fur; his chest exhibited a double chain of gold, mosaic or pinchbeck, and on his head he wore one of those dignified coverings called a Baronet: but nevertheless he

looked for some time a little irresolute, and not very unlike a house-breaker. At length he laid down his light, and began to prize up the floor.

He had not been five minutes at work before he had real cause to be startled, and so had his looker on, for the barn door was swung open as if the storm had burst through, and a tall, bony, gipsy-like man, with closely cropped hair, and scarcely any clothes, strode in as we might suppose a bull to enter the arena. Cheek snatched up his crow to a posture of defence, and staggered three or four paces back, with a loud convulsive demand of who he was, and what he wanted.

"I hope I see your worship well!" said a deep and too well-remembered voice. "Have you forgotten Aaron Daunt?"

"Aaron!—Aaron! They told me you were drowned!"

"You did not hope 'so,'" replied the man, with a hollow and bitter laugh. "It was like enough I *should* be drowned, for I had weighty matters to sink me!"

"Where do you come from?"

"From three of the four elements. First, from the air, out of a jail window; next, from a visit to the bottom of Lymp-ton river; and last, from the deepest dens of the forest, where I have been dodging bloodhounds, till I am driven to seek a better hiding-place."

"Have you been in the house?"

"Aye."

"Did you see the old woman?"

"She was asleep, up the chimney."

"I am glad of it—glad for your sake. You will be followed!"

"Give me that iron, and let them follow."

"There were two of you. Where is Bunckle?"

"I could not stay for him. He limps behind, and I don't want him; he has not heart enough, and I have something to do where I cannot trust him."

"But what is this I heard about Cox?"

"Only that I have killed him."

"So it is reported. Killed him? How?"

"Dashed him to smash against the prison wall!"

Cheek enquired a great deal more, and with frightful earnestness, but the wind had grown louder, and the rafters shuddered with a rumble like thunder. Mrs. Bloomer could hear nothing else for a few moments.

The next words she distinguished were:

"Don't be afraid. These riots in the village will divert suspicion, safe enough. Besides, your life is forfeited already if they catch you. If you mean to send him after Cox, now's your time, and here's plenty of money ready to help you off whenever you please."

"But where is he?"

"Staying with his old aunt, Mrs. Toogood. I saw him this afternoon."

The conversation was again interrupted, but con-

tinued very earnestly, till Cheek's gesture appeared to say he was going to fetch something, and then he went out. The light remained, and, as Aaron glared around him, his eye fell upon the wrenching-iron, and the half-raised boards. He approached and looked under them, and then at the door; but, either he was in no mood to be curious, or heard Cheek returning, for he resumed the place and the attitude in which he had been left.

"Here," said Cheek, carrying a double-barrelled gun. "There it is; I always keep it loaded with a brace of bullets, in case of thieves."

Aaron tried it to his shoulder, and carefully examined the caps. "That will do," he muttered, and something more, but the wind grew more boisterous, and only an occasional word could be heard, when, whiz! out went the flaring candle, and Mrs. Bloomer's eyes were as hopeless as her ears. Hopeless, indeed, was all the rest of her, for in that instant a pair of unseen arms were folded round her throat, and squeezed out a shriek that might have frightened an engine-driver!

Aaron and Cheek stood perfectly still and silent. The spectre or murderer, or whatever he might be, clenched her in a tighter embrace.

"A woman!" he whispered. "Be quiet and hold your tongue, or we shall have our throats cut!" whereupon Mrs. Bloomer's next paroxysm was reduced to a gasp.

"What could that have been?" asked Cheek, relighting his candle with a lucifer, and almost as

much out of his wits as his two eaves-droppers.

"Hush!" answered Aaron, who was not of a discomposable nature, "we may hear it again," and they stood listening.

"Not a word, as you hope for life!" whispered the spectre, with his very unspectre-like grasp removed to the lady's waist, and, as she *did* want to live, not a word did she say.

"Who and what are you, and what are you doing here?" he continued, in the same scarce audible tone.

"I don't know. I can't tell whether I am dead or alive! What are *you*, and what are you going to do with me?"

"Keep you quiet, if I can."

"Kill me?"

"No, nor eat you neither. I saw this light, and came for a look through, and so I suppose did you; so let's be friends, my beauty, and peep together."

It was no time to be fastidious; and with another scarce articulated injunction to silence, they pressed their cheeks close together, with each an eye through that terrible peep-hole. The two in the barn were still listening.

"I think it must have been some rusty hinge in the hog styer," said Cheek.

"That or some old screech-owl attracted by the light through the crannies. Let us have a look." And Aaron stepped straight to the two pair of eyes that were staring at him. The Commodore, for he

it was, tripped up his partner and crouched beside her, whilst Aaron put his fingers through the aperture, within a couple of feet of them.

"I thought so!" he said. "Don't you know birds always fly to the light, and can't you mend your boards till an old owl comes to tell you?"

The voice retreated, and again the eyes were in their place, and then came another calm, in which Cheek was heard to say—

"Set fire to old mother Toogood's haystack. It is sure to bring him out, but mind you don't miss him. That gun carries a bullet point blank for a hundred yards."

"Make yourself easy. He shall never send another man to prison."

Mrs. Bloomer's friend gave her a closer hug. "Did you hear that? Be off, old woman. They are coming out. Which is the way to find Mr. Crowley?"

"Through the gate and over the bridge, and then straight. You'll see the lights of the house."

"Then take care of yourself and away with you. If we lose a minute we shall have murder."

The Commodore, who had really a few good points, had not forgotten Crowley's compassion both to himself and his family, and floundered away with the splash of some marine creature that had got ashore by accident. His guide, with her dress again tucked through her pocket-holes, scudded away with him under bare poles till they reached the green, and then again pointing out his road, streamed



off before the wind; not in a line for the Vicarage, but straight for the Longland Arms, in which there was a light still flickering. What her purpose was will appear ere long.

Bunckle spun along to the Rosary as if the 'Cockle Shell' were again flying from the 'Kitty-wake,' but in his hurry and his panic and the great darkness, he more than once got out of his reckoning, and then got worse for fear Aaron should out-sail him. But on he struggled, blown and exhausted, till he butted his head against Mrs. Toogood's lodge gates. The old man and woman there had seen nothing of young master; and so on he struggled again till he scrambled his way to the hall-door, where he found a bell, at which he tugged as if he had recovered his own main-sheet. All the domestics and Mrs. Toogood herself, expecting nothing less than the rioters, rushed out together to know what was the matter.

"Where's Mr. Crowley?" he shouted. "I don't see him here! Where is he?"

"Mr. Crowley!" cried the amazed lady. "What does he mean? What uproar is this?"

"What signifies what? Where is he, I say?"

"Is the man mad? My nephew is coming here to sleep, but has not arrived!"

"Then tell me where to find him," and make haste!"

Never was such confusion! Nobody knew!

"Then, if I don't catch him in time, he's mur-

dered—that's all!" And away he plunged, before another question could be asked.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed all the old household in chorus. "We always said how it would be! We always said no good would come of encouraging such people! It has made them everything that's dreadful, and now they've gone and murdered Master James! Oh, dear, ma'am! Oh, mercy, ma'am! Oh, pray, ma'am, don't do so no more; for, as sure as you live, you'll be the next yourself!"

With what strain of wisdom, Mrs. Toogood, this time, brought them all to their senses, and herself too, or whether she ever became wise again, we have no note till we examine farther into our materials.

Crowley had seen Tom a good distance on his way, and was returning to keep his engagement with his aunt, by what he believed to be short cuts. The darkness soon caused him to lose himself, and it was nearly two hours before he stepped into a path which appeared to lead in the right direction. After pursuing this for some time, he stopped to make sure of his geography, and satisfied himself that he was about half a mile at the back of the Rosary. In the momentary halt the wind conveyed the sound of a footstep, meeting him at a long striding pace, which was heavy enough and rapid enough to run him down. Fearing a collision, he turned out of the path, and almost at the same instant, a tall dark figure brushed before the blast, and was immediately lost to hearing. That fellow,

he thought, seems to know his way better than I do, and to be running from some rascality. It must be past midnight, and country folks are seldom out at that hour for any good.

He resumed his walk with a better prospect of getting to the end of it, for there were now some red indications above the horizon of a stormy moon-rise. His track was down a hill side, at the bottom of which were Mrs. Toogood's meadows, and a lane, leading to the house, so down he pursued his way. The farther he went, the brighter grew the moon—if moon it was—which was now becoming doubtful. There was a hill on the other side of it, which could not be behind the moon: and now there was a red gleam with a copper-coloured halo round it! What could it be? He stopped to look more intently, and then a bright flame broke out. It was something on fire. A lime-kiln-perhaps, or charcoal burning. Presently the flame darted upward till it caught the line of the wind, and then streamed horizontally in fierce and pointed undulations. It was neither lime-kiln nor charcoal burning, but something more unusual. Suddenly his pulse began to beat an alarm. Was the house on fire? No; the increasing flame was reflected on the white walls at two or three hundred yards' distance. Mrs. Toogood had talked of her fine hay harvest; such a noble rick; such a feast for her pretty Alderneys, her fine sleek punchy carriage horses; but not to be cut till Christmas! Better she had cut it a little sooner, for not a blade would they get; horses or

cows. It was now a flaring furnace! In such a hurricane, not all the water in the county could have put it out. So there he stood transfixed; as bright an object on that hill-side as if he had been on fire himself.

He had not stood long before he was perceived by another spectator. Some one was scrambling up towards him, making frantic signs! Who could this be? Whoever he was he cared very little for his neck. As he approached he began to shout—

“Down, Mr. Crowley! Down amongst the bushes! Down, I say! Down!”

By all that was strange, it was the voice and figure of the creature he had committed to prison! the real and undrowned porposity of Commodore Bunckle; who, in another moment, dashed up to him, and, too breathless to speak another word, pulled him with all his force behind the screen of broom.

Crowley seized him by the collar. “So, Commodore, I have got you for the third time! Are you crazed? What is the matter?”

“By and bye!” panted Bunckle, pushing his head through the bushes for a better survey, “I was just in time!”

“In time for what?”

“Never mind. Lie still.” He was quivering all over from his rapid exertions, but never turned his eyes from their search.

“I saw him run away from the stack; but which way is he gone?”

"Which way is who gone?"

"Don't interrupt me. He is not far off."

"Only tell me—"

"Hush. Have you seen anybody?"

"Somebody ran past me a few minutes ago; but I could not see him."

"Nor he you; or else—but he must have seen you just now. I don't think he could have seen me, for I came up the water-course."

"But all this time—"

"Presently. Look to the right yonder, where the light shines but dimly, Do you see a small opening in the hill?"

"I can just see it."

"Keep your eye upon it. If that was he you met, he was taking a round to be out of the way till you came to see the mischief, for the path brings him back, just where you are looking."

Crowley saw it was useless to ask questions, and did as he was told; and thus they kept silent watch for another minute or two, when he placed his hand upon Bunckle's shoulder, and pointed to the opening.

"There's a gleam," he said, "upon something like the stem of a bush; only it appears to be moving along."

"Hey," replied the other, quickly catching sight of the object. "Do you know what that is? It is just what we are looking for. The reflection on a gun barrel. He is trying to get behind for a fair shot!"

"A shot ? and who is he ?"

"Who ? Why, that born devil, Aaron Daunt !"

The fact was now more credible. Aaron was the man he wanted ! "Getting behind me, is he ? Then we'll try and get behind him. He's too far off to be dangerous just yet. Take my hat and cloak, and walk slowly down the hill. Don't show too much of yourself, or he'll not follow ; and he shall find me where he does not expect me."

"I see, sir, you mean to lay the first hand upon him ; but, mind you, he's as strong as a horse. That stack was fired in the hope of bringing you out, and designed to be the light by which he meant to shoot you."

"So ! Will you give me your promise to keep out of distance ?"

"Aye, sir ; but not too far to help you to grapple with him."

"Then here are hat and cloak." And Crowley pulled them off as he lay on the ground, and Bunckle was transformed into something which, only half seen and blown about by the wind, might serve for a decoy. "Now go to yonder point ; and, after you have shown yourself, hide safely behind it."

"Be sure, sir, you keep him between you and the light. He must be close upon us !"

"Never fear me." And they took their different ways. The Commodore rising into the full glare, and walking composedly to a gravelly ridge, which intersected the broom with a bright fiery streak

After having leisurely shown himself, he sat down, just visible enough to mark where he was. It was a hazardous moment; for, though they were two to one, the gun, in skilful hands, would make terrible odds.

Crowley's progress amongst the tangled undulations was cautious and quick. Sometimes at a stop for examination, and sometimes at a run, lest the gun should get too near his representative. His half circuit ended at the place where he had seen it. But it was no longer there. It must have passed on towards the Commodore, and he hurried straight in the same direction, discarding his caution, because he was now going in the teeth of the wind, with the red reflection upon every fibre in front. Nothing was visible. The man must have lain down, or was crawling snake fashion. His pursuer might pass him or tumble over him; in the latter case, so much the better; and Crowley kept on at speed till he came within fifty yards of his comrade. What was his horror when he saw poor Bunckle's head clearly above the line of gravel, as bright as a solar lamp, against a black bunch of bushes, and, at the same glimpse, a motion in those before him which showed something advancing beneath them, at least twenty yards in advance. Had it been possible to make himself heard, he would have called out. A few desperate leaps brought him close enough to the lurker to see him in the act of taking aim! He was too late! The shot was fired, and the head dropped! Quick as

the shot itself, the assassin bounded up to escape ; but he met his follower and his match ; for Crowley knocked him from his legs with a blow that might have come from another bullet. Unluckily the force of his own impetus carried him a step down the incline of the hill, and when he recovered himself it was only to see his antagonist vanish in the darkness. He was taking the first step in pursuit when he was seized by the arm.

"It is of no use, Mr. Crowley," cried a voice which he thought must have come from the dead. "He has another barrel ready, and you shall not follow him !"

The second astonishment was greater than the first. The Commodore was not dead. He had never been more alive. The hat had a bullet through it, sure enough, but not so the head, which had providentially found a substitute in the top of a stick.

"Sit down, Mr. Crowley, and give him time to get out of the neighbourhood. He thinks you are done for, and will take care not to come back here ; but, if he sees you again, he'll make another trial." The exhausted Mr. Bunckle then threw himself upon the ground.

"If this is liberty I've had enough of it, and you may send me back to prison as soon as you like. Yes, to be hanged for Daunt's murder of Captain Cox."

"You deceive yourself," said Crowley ; "Cox only



received a few bruises, and is better than he deserves to be."

"The Lord be praised!" exclaimed Bunckle, starting quite as much as he had done at the shot. "The jailer told us he was dead!"

"He told you falsely. But how is it that I see you here? Fear nothing from me, for no duty can oblige me to send a man to prison who has just saved my life."

"May Heaven preserve it for many a year; for I owe you no grudge, sir. You only did what was right, and you did it as kindly as you could, and you befriended my poor children."

"Will you promise to be present at the trial of Captain Cox?"

"I will, as I hope to be saved."

"But where will you hide yourself in the meantime?"

"I have written to my girl, Nelly, to meet me in the forest where she knows I used to hide my kegs when I supplied this part of the country; and she will see you and always tell you where I may be found. But now, sir, I have something else to tell you." And therewith he described all that he had heard and seen in Cheek's barn; with the addition that he had a witness in an old woman, who, he believed, was the same for whom his boy Tom had minded the ducks.

"Mrs. Bloomer!"

"That's she! And she ran straight off to the public-house, where she expected to find the other beaks, and get a warrant."

"Then go where you will. You must not be seen there, but I must. Keep faith with me and say no more."

As they rose to take their separate ways, Crowley almost put his hand upon a piece of evidence against Cheek which proved of considerable value. It was the gun from which the shot had been fired. The knock-down blow had caused Aaron to drop it; and, scared by the deed he had done, and the sudden attack upon him, he had not had presence of mind to pick it up. The glare of the hay-stack was enough to show that it bore a silver crest upon the stock, and it was the crest of Sir Harry Longland.

## CHAPTER III.

WE now attend Mrs. Bloomer in her abrupt incursion upon their Worships, who had been all day, and had made up their minds to be all night, consulting in their Petty Sessions room at the Longland Arms; though it happened, as it often does at such meetings, that the more they consulted the less they did; for they had no more specials to swear in, and had speechified each other into a state of drowsiness which was not very surprising. In this state they were when the terrified and breathless Mrs. Bloomer rushed in, screaming for a warrant against the abominable and murderous Mr. Cheek. Their Worships started up with a full conviction that it was all over with them, and that the rabble had thrown amongst them a volley of hand grenades; and perhaps they might have been excused for a few exclamations more natural than magisterial. But, seeing the alarmist followed in by three or four of the rural police, they dropped back into their seats and stared as if their terror had been nothing but the explosion of insulted dignity.

Sir Hector Stonycross, who always sallied from his citadel on the first temptation of a broken head, thundered his demand of who the mad woman was and what she wanted ; but it was only by guesses founded on a clamour about Mr. Crowley and murder, and Mr. Cheek and hay-stacks and blunderbusses, that they made out something like her meaning. With some trouble they succeeded in arriving at sufficient particulars to bless their hearts and souls, and scratch out a hasty warrant for Christopher Cheek, of Broome Warren Chase, Esquire ; which being the first occasion on which he had been honoured with that address, was a rather ominous beginning to his course of distinction. The constables were directed to use all dispatch, and Mrs. Bloomer volunteered to guide them.

After about twenty minutes of doubt and dismay, a tramp was heard at the inn door, and a voice in great exasperation, denouncing vengeance against all law and all warrants, and all magistrates, and more particularly the blunder-heads of Broome Warren ; and then the room door was burst open, and in stamped Christopher Cheek, Esquire.

"Now, sergeant, where did you take the prisoner ? Relate the particulars."

"Please your Worship, we took him in his own barn ; but first the witness Bloomer guided us to a hole in the boarding to see what he was about."

"To see what he was about," repeated Sir Hector, writing down the evidence. "And what did you see ?"

"We saw two persons in very eager conversation ; one of whom was the prisoner ; the other was a tall, rough-looking man, one of those who lately escaped from Lympton jail, and the same your Worship committed for the possession of stolen letters."

"And what business had these fellows to be peeping about my premises ?" vociferated Squire Cheek. "I should have been justified in shooting them for housebreakers."

"Prisoner, you will be allowed to say what you please presently. You saw two persons in eager conversation. Did you hear what they said ?"

"Not all, Sir Hector, for the wind was very high, but I distinctly heard Cheek——"

"Fellow ! whom do you mean by Cheek ?"

"Pay no attention, serjeant. What did you hear him say ?"

"I heard him ask the other whether he was sure the shot had taken effect."

"It's a lie !—a conspiracy got up amongst you all !"

"Whether the shot had taken effect. Did the other make any answer ?"

"He said it had gone clean through the man's head, but he had not had time to examine, because he was attacked by another party, and was obliged to go off without his gun."

"Without his gun. Go on."

"The prisoner said that was a bad job, and might lead to detection. He must go back and look for it."

Cheek, finding that interruption was of no avail, confined himself to ejaculations, while Sir Hector continued to write, and asked "What else?"

"There was some talk about the burning of Mrs. Toogood's haystack, and the prisoner said the other had done it very well, only he wished he had burnt the old woman on the top of it, and then, to prevent the man from going off in search of the gun, I thought it time to break in upon them; but I'm sorry to say the door was barred within, and whilst we were breaking in he contrived to break out."

"I corroborate every word of it!" cried Mrs. Bloomer.

"Hold your tongue, ma'am, till you are wanted. Now, prisoner, if you have anything to ask the witness, now is your time."

"I should think I know that as well as you do," returned Cheek. "Now, you constable, how long have you known this Bloomer woman?"

"I have known Mrs. Bloomer since she complained to me that you had stolen her game cock."

"And what was the nature of your acquaintance?"

"I was requested to watch the premises."

"And you were often there in the night?"

"Very often."

"And I suppose you sometimes saw Mrs. Bloomer?"

"I did."

"Was her husband at home?"

"I believe not."

"Now, mind, you are on your oath.—You were sometimes asked in?"

"I was not."

"Then where did you see her."

"Looking about for her stray chicken."

"Now, answer me.—Were you not one of those chickens yourself?"

Mrs. Bloomer shrieked out, "Oh! goodness, gracious me! What does the man mean?"

"Hold your tongue, ma'am! Don't swear, ma'am, or I shall fine you five shillings. Keep to the point, prisoner; these questions are irrelevant."

"I say they are not. I am proving a collusion."

"You are suggesting a slander, and I'll not allow it."

"Well done, Sir Hector!"

"Hold your tongue, ma'am."

"Oh, gracious!"

"Fine Mrs. Bloomer five shillings. Are there any other constables to corroborate the sergeant?"

Three more stepped forward.

"Now, prisoner, will you prove a collusion with all four?"

"Yes, and with you too, if you won't stun us. I see how it is! Here's a plot amongst all of you, and I feel it beneath my station to say another word."

"Swear Mrs. Bloomer. Now, ma'am, your tongue is at liberty; but, remember, we want to understand you, and if we don't it may be our duty to discharge the prisoner."

The caution was magical. Mrs. Bloomer would rather never have spoken again.

"Now, witness, you told us something about peeping through a hole in the prisoner's barn?"

Witness had "told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help ——"

"Never mind, ma'am, you needn't swear any more; you have been fined five shillings already. What caused you to peep?"

She had begun to peep a long time ago.

"What caused you then?"

She had been looking for some chickens one dark night, and had seen a light in the barn, and that caused her to peep.

"And what did you see?"

She saw enough to make her peep ever since. The prisoner was examining papers from a large tin box, and muttered to himself that they were dangerous, and then he buried them under the flooring. She showed the constables exactly where it was.

"Place it on the table."

Cheek grinned in derision. "Aye, place it on the table."

The serjeant again stepped forward. "Please, your worship, we have not been able to bring it. The moment the prisoner saw Mrs. Bloomer point to the spot where some flooring had been prized up he threw his candle into a large collection of barn rubbish piled about it, and swore we should only search his premises at the cost of our lives.



We were compelled to escape as fast as we could, and the box is no doubt consumed."

"Make haste, and try again. That box must be worth all the rest of the evidence. He would not else have burnt his premises for it."

Several constables started off, Mrs. Bloomer again showing them the way.

Cheek's merriment increased to a fierce laugh at the absurd invention of any box at all, and he was violently asserting that such a falsehood betrayed the whole conspiracy, when a sudden hurra arose among the crowd outside, and prepared their worships for a new event, which was nothing less than the very surprising appearance of Crowley himself.

"There," shouted Cheek, amid the general rejoicing, "There is the man I have murdered! What do you all say now!"

But his exultation was suddenly stopped by the sight of his own gun.

Crowley's statement was very short, describing merely what had happened to him, with the exhibition of the gun, just as he had picked it up, with one hammer down on the barrel discharged, and the other barrel loaded. This, taken in connection with the perforated hat, was something staggering, and Cheek began to feel himself in a serious predicament, especially when the man who had made the attempt was identified with Aaron, and the Commodore promised as a witness at the Assizes.

"Now, prisoner, ask Mr. Crowley what questions you please."

But Cheek was brought to a stand, for he knew the ownership of the gun could be proved beyond dispute, and had no questions to ask. He was so much confused that he forgot how far he was in the power of Aaron, of whom he now very desperately endeavoured to make a scapegoat. He had employed that man, he said, out of charity, and had been horrified to hear of his committal on a theft, and his murder of a fellow prisoner. Was he not just the man to do a similar deed on Mr. Crowley, who had apprehended him? He had suspected him of stealing the gun long ago, and very ardently hoped he would be convicted. Alas! Mr. Cheek never reflected that when the garrison is weak we only defend one point by exposing a great many others, of which he was destined ere long to see the truth, for amongst his auditors was one who took dangerous notes of every word he said.

Being asked what he had to say why he should not be sent for trial, he had, of course, a great deal to say; but, as it was all confined to paroxysms of fury, it amounted to nothing, and Sir Hector made the final harangue and the commitment according to established forms, that is to say, for a conspiracy to kill, slay, and destroy one James Crowley, of Oaken-dell House, in this county, by the perforation of the said Crowley's hat with a deadly missile called a bullet, under the belief that the said Crowley's head

was in the said hat, then and there, and not in any other part of His Majesty's dominions. A post-chaise and two mounted police, with two more inside, were then ordered out, and presently Christopher Cheek, Esquire, of Broome Warren Chase, was trotted off to those unpleasant quarters to which it has already been our lot to consign three of his acquaintance.

The evil spirit of Cheek might almost be said to go off in a flash of fire, for he was lighted out of the village by a blaze from both his farm and his mansion. It turned out that the first had scarcely flared up when it seemed to illuminate fiercer memories of long and cruel oppressions in the lookers on, who suddenly took the same view of the public disorder which Cheek himself had taken in reference to Mrs. Toogood's haystack, the destruction of which, he had represented to Aaron, would naturally be attributed to the mob of strangers. There would never be such another opportunity for paying off old scores. To Green Lane's end, therefore, streamed the tide of discord, and, after a rapid clearing of the live stock, which consisted of old Nanny, up went the flames as fast as a general rottenness could carry them. Very soon the floor tumbled in, and very soon afterwards the roof followed suit, and sent its hurricane of sparks dancing in the blast, amid yells and screams which apprised Captain Drinkwater that his immortality could be deferred no longer, more particularly as the reinforcements which had been sent for after the first contest now marched up,

half-a-dozen strong, inspired by the martial music of drum and fife, and led by Serjeant Anak.

The Royal Regiment of Goose Green had been drawn up in compact form, ever since the repulse, before the ale-house door, and had well qualified themselves for battle when their bold commander gave the word for action.

“And then and there was hurrying to and fro,  
And mounting in hot haste.”

One dauntless dragoon gave his burly comrade a leg up, and two made a hoist for the same stirrup, and a third seized the reins of his right hand man, and flogged up the charger of his left, and their leader thought of Waterloo, and pointed out the countless black legions against the fiery background.

“Lieutenant Choke,” was his last direction—for such was the rank of our friend the apothecary—  
“If I fall you are the next in command—Char-r-ge!”

And, alas! he did fall; for on the other side of the hedge which confined Cheek’s lane was a broad, black ditch which served as a channel for the muck to the village stream. Over this the fated captain checked his charger to crane, and, in that brief period of existence which is commonly called no time, not a vestige of him was to be seen above ground or water but his boots and spurs. The next in command screamed “Halt! He’ll be smothered! The enemy is retreating! Give them a volley over

their heads for fear they come back, and pull him out by the spurs!"

It is a great mortification to have raised the hopes of the Muse, and found her so little to sing about; and the only excuse we can plead is that such is very often the case with greater geniuses. Truth obliges us to say that the battle of Goose Green concluded with the beginning; for no sooner was heard the ear-piercing fife of the regulars, than every hob-nail felt a loadstone in the heart that had set off before it, and the fall of Drinkwater in the arms of Victory is all we have to record.


The volley over their heads was carried by the wind in greatly augmented reports to the Rosary, where, of course they were multiplied a hundred per cent., and a great deal more.

"Oh, criminy!" cried Miss Betsy, "the battle has begun. Hadn't we better send for a few soldiers?" for the messenger who had gone for them had returned that way to give the glad tidings of relief, and restore his energies.

"Yes, ma'am, yes," puffed the fat butler. "It's a raging! I always said how it would be!"

"What's to be done? where shall we fly? will nobody advise?" deplored our bankrupt Minerva.

"It's too late, ma'am!" panted the corpulent footman. "There's at least a hundred thousand of 'em, but the young man from the Grannydears is taking his supper, and I'll send him for the baggy-nets!"



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We cannot wonder if, on a night when really

“The De’il had business on his hand,”

Crowley forgot all about his engagement to his aunt, whom he now knew to be in no danger of molestation. He had no desire to help everybody in doing nothing, and there was not a soul he could trust for better service. He had quickly perceived, from what he heard of the evidence previous to his arrival, and of Cheek’s injunction to Aaron, that the only place where he had a chance of falling in with his would-be assassin was where he had lost his weapon. To that spot, therefore, he risked a great deal by repairing at his best speed, in order to keep watch, for his confidence in himself had no limit, and now, of all others, was the time to enforce the secret so important both to Lucy and himself. We leave him to his peril, and turn to events in another quarter.

## CHAPTER IV.

IN the depth of the forest were large tracts of a far different character from that which we have seen hitherto. In many places were large stony ravines, intersecting each other in chaotic confusion, forming beds for dwindled streams, and stagnant deposits of black and slimy water, that marked the commencement of extensive bogs of blue clay, covered with a treacherous verdure, which often tempted the wandering cattle into difficulties from which no plunge could extricate them. Frequently where the soil appeared to be hard and dry, and the furze and fern were luxuriantly tangled, an incautious foot would set roods waving like the swell of a sea, the safety of the intruder depending entirely upon the toughness of the surface. Very few strollers, therefore, penetrated to these regions. Even the sportsman who knew the dangerous geography, and went almost everywhere, would seldom risk himself and his dogs where, if they were not swallowed up, they were sure to be very soon dead beaten. Besides, there was little to tempt his game

to such places, or any living creature except a large community of owls and carrion crows, which built unmolested in the huge decayed trees, grouped in every position where a firm patch of earth afforded them foot-hold. The only persons who, from time to time, visited this strong fortress of age and rheumatism, were stray poachers and charcoal-burners, who occasionally picked up a deer that had been driven from his herd, or felled some towering beech beyond cognizance of the law. To such persons only were the safe lines of access familiar, and, at intervals of several miles, might be found some roughly constructed shelter of boughs and brambles, furnished and thatched with whatever undergrowth chanced to be at hand.

In one of these samples of forest architecture, Bunckle—who had often carried on his smuggling trade with villages far distant from the element of the ‘Cockle Shell’—had established a depository for his tubs, and, when he broke out of prison with Aaron, thither they betook themselves till they could decide what to do next.

On the night of which we have been giving so lengthened an account, whilst the darkness was as black as the carrion crows, and the whoop of the owls gave additional horror to the howling of the storm, might have been heard the fitful groan of an inmate of this den—a groan not of bodily but mental agony, which would have been apparent from involuntary exclamations too frightful for anything else. They alluded one while to some confederate



who did not come, and again, to visions of hangmen and gibbets, and final destinations. From which the reader will conclude that the writhing desperado was Aaron Daunt.

On escaping from the barn where Cheek was apprehended, Aaron had fled straight for this remote sanctuary, which, by the instinct of a long accustomed dweller in the bush, he had contrived to reach under difficulties which, to others, would have been insurmountable. Like most, we believe, who commit great crimes—and Aaron was under the impression that he had perpetrated two murders—he found a great difference in his sensations before and after these achievements, particularly the last, for which there was so much less motive. The exasperation which had urged him blindly on seemed almost to be driven from his feelings by the shot that had felled the supposed head of Crowley, and he had hardly got off when Conscience, with an ever ready reproach, began to ask him the question of whether he had not wreaked upon one man the wrongs he had received from another. Or in other words, ran a muck so indiscriminate as to confer a show of justice on his first conviction, and make any future fate less pitied than the rattling bones which, at that period, scared the traveller in every haunt of the highwayman. Now that there were none to be revenged on, he felt his former nature return in a shape more frightful than his wrongs, and he had dashed along his lonely midnight path, pursued by phantoms that would have

made it a relief to dash out his brains against the first impediment.

It was more than two hours since he had hurled himself into that hut, and pressed his clenched fists against his temples, as if to crush out all power of reflection, when another figure stole through the dismal gloom, and the blast brought to his ears a low and cautious voice which murmured "Father!" Aaron started up in a sitting posture.

The voice was no delusion, for the speaker came nearer, and now murmured the name of Aaron. It seemed the call of an accusing spirit; but the tones were well remembered, and he took courage to answer it with a wild exclamation of "Nelly!"

Poor Nelly! We are sensible that on her first introduction to these pages we gave no favourable impression of her: but it must be remembered that very many of us would lose much were we estimated in connection with the soiled specimens of humanity amongst which we may chance to be mingled. Where there is no field for the better qualities to show themselves, they must of necessity be hidden, and those whose fate it is to travel over the roughest regions must arm their feet accordingly. Something of her real nature has occasionally glinted forth, like the daisy on the fallow, but not enough to do her justice, and we have scarcely space left to make her amends. We are, in fact, in the position of some improvident old gentleman, who has emptied his pockets amongst his most importunate applicants, and reserving little or nothing for the most

deserving. But Nelly was easily contented in her days of hardship, and would be as easily satisfied with her niggard history.

Perhaps one of the most joyous moments it afforded was when she sprang to the side of Aaron. He was, like herself, not always the character in which circumstances have obliged us to describe him. Others had made him a ruffian, but nature, like a bird of passage, never omits her passing visit to the nest from which she has been expelled; and Nelly had heard kind words and received kind sympathies and much that gained value by force of contrast, under the roof of Mr. Cheek.

"How came you here, Nelly?" said Aaron, as soon as he could speak; "I heard you were at Sea Cliff."

"I travelled from Sea Cliff to-day, Aaron. I did not walk. The generous hand of Mr. Crowley helped me to hire a conveyance."

Aaron uttered a deep groan.

"Why do you groan, Aaron, when you must be so happy?"

Again he groaned, and more deeply than before.

"Aaron, what ails you? Surely your freedom is not less welcome because it comes from him? I have much more to tell you of his goodness; for the moment he heard from me that you had been sent to prison unjustly he gave me this letter for you, and said you might expect amends much better. I have been ill from overwork, or I should have

taken it to Lymp-ton, if my father had not written to say you were here."

"What is it about, Nelly? What does he say to me?"

"I don't know what he says, but I know he enclosed a bank-note in it."

Aaron shuddered, and dropped upon his face.

"Go on, go on; I cannot be more damned than I am already."

"Oh, do not use such words. I know Cheek hated him, and tried to make you hate him too; but you are too good for that. I do not wonder you are sorry; but Mr. Crowley will never wish for more."

"Never, never, never!"

"Then only think how good to send you this by me; because, he said, it would have more value from my hands. You cannot see how I am dressed, that such a visitor might not disgrace you in the prison. It was his order, his money, Aaron. It makes me cry, but I am very, very happy. We shall never have such another friend."

"Never more, Nelly, never more. Did you come through Broome Warren?"

"No; I did not wish to be seen there. I knew another road, though many miles about. But I only began walking where the forest was too rough for wheels. I know it so well I could find my way blindfold; for in this spot I have many and many a time watched for my father. He cannot be far off since I find you here."

"And where shall I be next?"

"I do believe, from something he said, that you will be with Mr. Crowley."

"Never, never; for he will be in heaven, and I in hell. Away, Nelly, away! I told you I am damned, and you will not believe me. Hear, then, to your cost; or rather, fly away from me before my words strike you dead!"

"Aaron, you frighten me! You are not mad?"

"Oh that God had made me so, and not left the work to my own hands! I tell you Crowley is in heaven. I sent him there myself. This cursed night I murdered him!"

Nelly shrieked and fell, as if he had murdered her too, when another voice broke in—

"No! It's a lie! You did no such thing! whatever you have done by my poor girl! Nelly, Nelly! a curse upon your bellowing, she cannot hear me! Stop your ramping and roaring, and bring me a hatful of water! I say you have murdered nothing and nobody but a hay-stack; for I just left Mr. Crowley as much alive as you are."

Nelly just heard the last words, and, with Aaron, sprang speechless from the ground, while Bunckle pursued his rough and breathless explanation. How he had listened at the barn; how he had warned Crowley, and how his hat had been shot through much nearer his own head than that of the intended victim. He went on to say that, on parting from Crowley, the abode of Cheek had lain in his way to the forest, and that he had witnessed his arrest and

determined to see the end of it; the danger incurred, considering the multitude of strangers by whom he was surrounded, not being enough to deter him. He had not only followed the indignant march across the green, but had actually suffered himself to be thrust by the pressure behind him amongst the magistrates where he had heard all that passed. "And now, Aaron, what do you think he did? He not only accused you of shooting Mr. Crowley, but of stealing his gun for the purpose, which I know you did not, because I saw him give it to you! He did, as I hope to be saved! And what do you think they've done with him? They've sent him to Lympton to be tried at the assizes, and burnt his house down! Barns, stacks, and every stick about it! I left 'em in a roaring flame, and nothing to be sorry for except a box of his papers which, they say, would have been the best proof of the evidence against him. But nobody dared venture into the fire for it."

Aaron uttered a fierce exulting cry—"Accused me of the murder for which he offered to pay me, did he? Of stealing the gun which he placed in my hands? By the hottest of fires it shall be a hot fire that saves him! God bless you both. There's work worth doing! Take care of yourselves, and you shall hear news enough!"

With which he sprang like a tiger from his lair, and crashed away with the wind.

## CHAPTER V.

LONG and stormy was the watch of Crowley on that night, but his well-imagined, though over-rash project brought little hope of success; for, in the first place, the stack he left in flames was burnt out, and the situation in which it had stood was undistinguishable, so that he could not tell whether he had returned to the exact spot of his adventure; and, in the next place, it was very unlikely that Aaron would come to seek his gun whilst there was not light to look for it. His only chance, was in the first gleam of morning and a close attention meanwhile to every variation of the wind, with its many hints of approaching action, and as many disappointments. In ordinary circumstances he would have been almost worn out, for he had gone through much exertion; but, in the present, he seemed to grow more alive at every moment, and gradually the lulling of the blast made him more so, for it enabled him to listen with more assurance. Still, when there was no whisper from the sky, there was a dead silence everywhere else. He was

wet, and would have been very cold and comfortless if he could have thought of such trifles, but he never moved from his dripping bush whilst the rustle of a twig might attract notice from the lurker whom he imagined to be close at hand. There was nothing to be done but to keep his eyes fixed for the first break in the east. It broke at last, and showed him he was not far from the spot he had sought, but it showed him nothing more. In another hour, the day came on calmly; and, as the light increased, his expectations faded. If Aaron had intended coming he would hardly have delayed till after people were abroad to observe him, and he was obliged to conclude his long watch a failure.

It was not, perhaps, so great a failure as he thought it, for it had kept him away from Cheek's conflagration, where he might certainly have seen Aaron, but in all likelihood have lost his life in attempting to secure him; for prudence, we have seen, was not his greatest gift. But we must here tell things as they were told to him, and keep him company till he returned reluctantly to the confused scene he had left.

It was a gloomy sight. All the busy idlers seemed to have been blown in a heap to Cheek's corner, where the smoke was still hanging in a long and heavy canopy, and continued thickening with black and white jets from charred posts or dangling bits of rafter, still alive with smouldering fire. The range had been extensive, counting barns and various out-houses, in addition to the dwelling



house; and whatever was left appeared clad in deep mourning for its master. The police were active in all parts, and over the debris of the barn that had contained the tin box, in particular, and to these he hastened first. The sergeant was just emerging from the ashes, and seemed to feel Crowley a welcome sight.

"I am glad you were not here before, sir. I guess where you have been, and should have been there too, for it was well thought of; but I knew there was no chance of Aaron whilst it was dark, and it was of no use to go afterwards. We knew too well what had become of him."

"What do you mean? What has become of him?"

"Just what would have become of you, sir, I suspect, if you had chanced to be here; for the errand that took you away shows you don't think too much of your safety. The man is buried somewhere in those ashes, and we are trying to dig him out."

"Burnt!"

"Aye, sir, that he is. We used every exertion for more than an hour to get at that box I told you of; but were always driven back by the fire, which the wind blew in all directions, till we had nothing to do but look on till it moderated. At this time, while we were thankful to find ourselves alive, we saw the most horrid sight I ever looked upon! In the midst of the flames rose up that man Daunt, dashing about the fire in his last agonies. We tried at all hazards to get to him, but it was impossible,

and after a few moments we lost sight of him. How he got there I can't conceive. He would hardly have ventured on purpose; and, if he had hidden himself on the premises at the time we took Cheek, he would have been stifled long before. There were plenty of people all round the ruins, except where the wind drove the smoke too thick to live in, but nobody saw him come out, and there he must lie, somewhere, consumed to a cinder."

Crowley was very much shocked, both at Aaron's terrible fate and his own final loss of the source upon which he had so mainly counted; but he felt that his absence might indeed have been fortunate for him. What he might have dared for a last hope he was afraid to think of; but he was still unreasonable enough to retain some glimmer of it, though nobody else did. Aaron's miraculous escape from Lymp-ton still kept it alive, and it was too precious to be given up. He therefore assisted some hours in the search, and was much cheered at the end of them that nothing was discovered. At the worst, there might be some reliance on the Vicar's letters, and when the day was sufficiently advanced he resolved upon the visit he had undertaken to Mrs. Bloomer.

He could hear from where he stood that she was at home, for she kept everybody aware of that fact by her constant screams of "dilly, dilly, dilly," and so he took the liberty of considering himself included in the invitation. He was, however, rather premature, for it was not yet her hour to receive

visitors, and she had not assumed her overalls or her last fashionable head-dress, and was nothing but *papillotes* and *deshabille*, with a bowl of potato peelings in her hands, and before her a voracious squattering from the duck-pond. On seeing the intruder taking stock of her attractions, she looked very much disposed to hurl the bowl at his head, but confined herself to a rebuke more stately.

"I think, sir," she said, "I have seen you before—Mr. Crowley, I believe? I do not usually receive visitors at this early hour; but, no doubt, you come on business?"

Crowley felt strongly inclined to forget his polite gravity. He had called, he said, thus early to relieve his mind from a painful apprehension that Mrs. Bloomer's anxiety for the Vicar might be injurious to her health.

"Oh, goodness me!" she replied, "how very considerate! Perhaps you can also do me the favour to say what you have done with him. Whether he is still living, and, if not, whereabouts he is buried; and likewise what has become of his niece, whom I hear you arrested in her flight with Captain Cox. It has caused a great deal of talk in the neighbourhood, but I hope it will be hushed up and end in a marriage."

"I am sorry to tell you, Mrs. Bloomer, that she is not married yet, though I trust you may have the happiness of seeing her provided for before very long."

"Oh, dear, I hope so; though I pity the poor man. But, perhaps, he may not be very wise; and then if he can prevent her from running away again he may not be much worse off than before."

"Very possibly not. It is pleasant to hear you say so. Mr. Bloomer, I am rejoiced to say, is still living, and likely to live for many years."

"Indeed! I hope he will not think of coming back to his living as long as it does him good to forget it." And so with mutual regard they bowed and curtsied their way into the house.

Whether it was now for the first time, or whether it was malice prepense, we cannot tell, but Crowley certainly felt that morning that he might confer a great blessing upon all parties concerned by committing just a small sin against one of the injunctions of the marriage ceremony. He was, in fact, revolving in his mind the very great pity that, when old ladies and gentlemen live together with such a galling strain upon their bonds, the clergyman should forbid all commiserating friends to unloose them. Would there be so very much harm in doing so very much good, and diverting certain views below ground to very agreeable ones above it? Such were the no doubt reprehensible thoughts of Crowley when he seated himself once more vis-à-vis to Mrs. Bloomer, with a due care to have the table between them.

"And so," she began, "the old man is really alive! And pray, Mr. Crowley, have you any idea

how long he expects me to wait for him? or whether I am to sacrifice the best days of my life in this miserable old house, with the rain pouring in on one side, and the rats on the other, after he has felt the necessity of running away from it himself? Do you suppose I should have stayed here in a neighbourhood so far beneath me if I had not felt how indispensable I was to his comfort? And then to leave me no society but his little moping curate, who can talk about nothing but sermons and sins, and visiting the sick and doing one's duty. I shouldn't have thought of it, indeed! But I've turned him out of the house, and I won't let him in again, and I won't have any more curates, and you may tell Mr. Bloomer so."

"My dear madam, I see clearly your life is very uncomfortable, and if I can offer any suggestion to Mr. Bloomer for making it otherwise, I do hope you will command me."

"Well, that's something to the purpose, and the first thing you may do is to tell him I won't stay here, for there's not a person within ten miles who shows me decent respect; and, notwithstanding the excellent temper I am blessed with, I have been obliged to quarrel with the whole county! Gracious me! It's abominable, when my two young sisters are engaged to two of the *crème de la crème* of Rosherville Gardens, and drinking tea every evening with all London—it's abominable that, I who am three or four years their elder, should be im-

mured amongst a set of hum-drums who never heard of such a place."

"Quite so, my dear madam; I feel what you say most sensibly. And if I might offer a remark without offence, I should say that you have just dropped a piece of information which seems to open a brilliant resource for you till these young ladies are called upon to fulfil their engagements. No event in life could afford such happiness to both parties as a residence together, which would enable them to enjoy the inestimable benefit of your three or four years of greater experience; and yourself—for it is not to be denied that Mr. Bloomer is advanced in life—to form future arrangements, to which I must not allude more particularly, amongst that immense assemblage of fortune and fashion. But I fear the interest I feel is leading me too far."

"Oh, not at all—not at all. Pray go on."

"Well, if it really would be a delight to you to join these young ladies, and you commission me to relieve you from the pain of making a proposal so embarrassing, I beg you will make any use of me you please, and I will lose no time in ascertaining whether Mr. Bloomer really thinks he could get on reasonably well under so great a privation, and guarantee a proper provision out of the proceeds of this living."

"Oh mi, that would be just the thing! I am quite decided, if the provision is large enough; and you may settle it all to-day!"

"With all the pleasure in the world. And now, as I am pressed for time, perhaps you will allow me to make a small request. Mr. Bloomer has, I believe, preserved a considerable quantity of old correspondence?"

"Correspondence! There was not a cupboard in the house that was not full of it!"

"That is most fortunate, and will probably give you the satisfaction of proving Cheek worse than you proved him last night. I doubt, indeed, if it will not hang him."

"Hang him! Can't he be hanged without them?"

"Certainly not; for the crime on which he is committed is only transportable."

"There now!" cried the lady, bouncing out of her wits. "There now! what made him stuff his correspondence into every crack and cranny of the house, like the jack-daws!"

"Very inconsiderate, my dear madam; but if you will only be good enough to give me possession of them, you shall soon have ample proof that it is very fortunate he did not destroy them."

"Oh dear! Oh mercy me! This it is to have a silly old husband to whom no woman in her senses could give credit for possessing anything of consequence!"

"You will give him more credit when you see the immense value of these letters."

"Gracious; don't I tell you they are of no value at all! Not a single one of them!"

"But you will allow me to look at them."

"Don't I say you can't?"

"But if they are in the cupboards—"

"I tell you they ain't! I wanted the cupboards for a brood of young Dorkings, and moved all the rubbish out."

"But, my dear madam, what did you do with it?"

"Burnt it all in a heap! What else could I do with it?"

Crowley's errand was done, and he rose to make his bow.

"Suffer me, madam, to thank you, on the part of Mr. Cheek, for proving yourself the greatest friend he has in the world, and depend upon my forwarding your views upon Rosherville with all expedition."

Not having any farther civilities at disposal, or leisure to wait for the gracious reception of these, he added a strikingly polite good-morning, and was on his way to Goldsworthy.

But he had first to go to Tom Philpot for his horse, and at every step of the walk his exasperation more and more confirmed his belief that the fate of Aaron was not to be decided as had been described. The truth was that he could not and would not afford to lose hope from all quarters, and allow the killing doubts of poor Lucy to remain doubts for ever. He persuaded himself that the police, having failed, were unwilling to admit that



success had been possible, and that the superior daring of Aaron, for whatever motive, had put them to shame. In which determined feeling he arrived at Huntsmore Lodge, and found Tom had just returned, and been horrified by the news of the last night.

"Tom," he said, "I am in your debt for a desperately long hunt for Cox, and I am now unreasonable enough to call upon you for another after Aaron. He is reported to have been burnt in Cheek's bonfire, but I am certain that he merely showed himself there to prevent further search for him; that he got off scathless, and that he cannot yet be far away. Make enquiries for me, my dear Tom, at all the hiding-places you know,—and nobody knows the country so well. Have handbills printed, and offer any reward for his apprehension, or for himself, with every encouragement that may tempt him to come forward. I myself must ride off to Goldsworthy to prove I am not murdered, and give all my time to the two prosecutions."

Tom saw there was no time for question or self-reproach for his last night's absence, and was as eager for this chase as he had been for the first. He ordered out the two horses as fast as they could be saddled, and again vowed stoutly that he would never return without his man.

"Go you, Mr. Crowley, where I hope there is, as yet, no uneasiness about you, and depend upon

hearing news if it is anywhere to be found in the land of the living."

And with these brief words they jumped upon their horses and took their different ways.


## CHAPTER VI.

ON arriving at Goldsworthy, Crowley was told that the Vicar was out with the young ladies, but that Lady Goldfield was at home; and, seeing that his night's news had not preceded him, he was glad to defer it till he could hear something more definite of the prospects of Lord Goldfield, and speak what comfort he could to the melancholy mother.

He found her alone, musing and disconsolate, but happy, as on all occasions, to see him.

"I have been wishing very much," she said, "for a little quiet conversation with you about my miserable son. I need not tell you that his ruin is complete, or that the name which my husband raised so high must become a bye-word and a warning to all who envied it. My days of pride are over, and it is time to think of humility."

"No, my dear Lady Goldfield. No ruin is complete which might have been much greater. If he has squandered a fortune he has saved what is much more valuable. From my own observations,



and from many inquiries I have made by letter in the best quarters, he is free from all imputation but the imprudence too common in early days and high position. He has on his side the deepest sympathy and indignation of all honourable men, and you are thus relieved from far the heavier half of your affliction. We have only to look to that loss which is of daily occurrence, and which few have the fortitude to hold so cheaply as it is held by yourself."

"We will speak of that presently. I have first to tell you that immediately after his dismissal from this house, and whilst he must have been lurking about Sea Cliff, this man, Cox, with the vengeful feeling natural to such spirits, sent my son the list of his liabilities, far exceeding any amount he can command during his hapless life. It was almost *paid* with his life, which I believe was only preserved by the contemplation of my terrible alarm for it; and he is now brought to that gloomy state of resignation which we hear of in condemned criminals, who, feeling that they have nothing to hope, feel also that they have nothing to fear. From this state I have been thinking how to restore him, and here you can assist me."

"I beseech you, how?"

"I must remove him to a distance from his recent associates, and to other scenes where he can pass his time with the least possible regret for the style of life which he must now leave. His own estate is entailed upon some future, and, I trust, more

provident possessor, and will, of course, be immediately dismantled ; and I want you to help me in the disposal of Goldsworthy. Do not speak your astonishment. I have pain enough already, and it would pain me still more to resist the arguments you are prepared to offer against my settled purpose. To what end should I remain here when all its comforts would be gone ? And what enjoyment could I find equal to the reflection that I have rescued my only son from dishonourable debts to any one, however base ? Should I not feel myself unworthy of the pride with which it was once my lot to be regarded ? It is, I say, my fixed resolution to remove this burthen from our name, and carry with me, if little more, the respect and goodwill of a world which has nothing else so valuable to bestow."

Crowley had contemplated nothing like this, and could scarcely speak for amazement.

"Lady Goldfield," he said, "you cannot choose but hear me, and it is not even your displeasure that could silence me. You have told me what you are thinking of, and I must tell you what you forget. You know how you are loved by all whose love is worth possessing : how you are blessed and looked up to : how the wide range of your dependents must suffer by the close of their last hope from the hand that never failed them. You know how your son is loved and honoured for your sake and his father's, and also for his own ; and now calculate what sort of blessings will fall upon his

head for including in his reckless ruin a mother whom the best man in creation would not be good enough to deserve. I know this sacrifice has never been proposed to him. Beware how you try him, for it would be the last blow to bear him down."

Lady Goldfield trembled as she replied—

"I believe—it is miserable to say I hope—that you over estimate the quality of his principles. He has given me much reason to doubt them. What else is to be done?"

"Anything but the worst. We must trust, as he has trusted himself, to chance; and I cannot believe that we have none. Of one thing we may be sure—these claims are in abeyance whilst the claimant is in jail for felony. What may be the end of them in the event of a conviction, we cannot say! but a few days will determine. For Henry—I only ask you to hear me speak to him, and see how far you have misjudged him."

"It is a blessing to be opposed by such words. I know not how to answer them, for my courage and my senses have been bitterly tried. We will talk of this again. My poor Henry was anxious to see you."

"Then let us go to him. I cannot convince you too soon."

As they ascended the stairs to the young lord's dressing-room, they heard him interrogating his servant.

"Who brought it?" he asked. "Who knows I am here? Where does it come from?"

"A messenger has just come with it, my lord, from Lymp-ton jail."

"Lymp-ton jail!"

"By heaven, it is from Cox!" exclaimed Crowley, as they entered. "Break it open—let us hear what he says!"

"Crowley! I am very glad to see you. But jail! Is Cox in jail?"

His dangerous illness had hitherto prevented any communication of the recent history of Cox; and Crowley ran it over in the fewest words that could tell it, amidst rage and amazement that may very well be conceived.

"Now for his letter! Let us see to what extent effrontery, falsehood, and villany can go."

Lord Goldfield tore it open, and read aloud—

"DEAR GOLDFIELD,

"There is the devil to pay! I am in jail, with a d——d turnkey set over me to see what I write; but the brute can't read, and so no matter. That fellow Crowley—who had better take care of himself when I come out—has sent me here on a false charge of trying to run away with a girl I saw at your mother's, and has bribed a batch of rascals to bear witness against me. Use your influence with Lady Goldfield and her big friends to get me out, or make your Justice withdraw his committal, which is better, and never mind the accounts I sent to you. Moses Pinhorn is clamorous for instant payment, and swears he will make a bankrupt of

you next week ; but I have some influence over him and can gain you more time and a large remission of the debt ; though only if you get me out, now directly, by the bearer. I must be discharged in the morning, for I can't wait, and I won't ! So look to it, for you had better ; and believe me, your sincere friend,

“SAMUEL COX.”

Lady Goldfield and Crowley stood almost stupefied with admiration at this model composition for the guidance of friendly correspondence, though neither of them spoke ; for Crowley thought here was an admirable test of the young lord's real character, and a most timely reassurance for the doubting mother. How would the usual run of sporting young gentlemen have acted under an opportunity which, to such perceptions, would have conveyed no more shame and dishonour than their betting book ? We are rather afraid to pronounce a judgment ; but there was no hesitation in young Harry, of Goldfield, who only stopped, as it were, to swallow something that almost choked him. Every drop of his blood seemed to rush up to his pallid face, and his teeth and his hands were clenched with an indication that it was well for Captain Cox to be defended, even by the walls of a prison. But he only begged pardon for a moment whilst he wrote a few words in reply. Materials lay upon the table amongst his many passports to despair, on which he had been making notes of admiration, and his letter was soon finished.



But it was not addressed to Cox, who was only indulged with a sight of it by the complaisance of the governor of the jail.

"Sir,"—it began to that authority—

"I beg to enclose a letter which I have just received from a prisoner in your custody on a charge of felony. You will make what use of it you think proper, and oblige me by preventing any repetition of insults from a person of whom I know nothing but a long series of consummate villanies. I have the honour to be

"Your obedient servant,

"GOLDFIELD."

The note was handed to Lady Goldfield with a smile that intimated the writer's full knowledge of the oppression which chiefly weighed upon her, and which beyond doubt is one of the heaviest with which a parent's heart can be afflicted—a want of pride and confidence. The unexpected incident of that note, now dispatched by the servant who had waited for it, acted like a flash of sun that is brightest in the darkest shade and melts the cloud that produced it.

"Henry!" she exclaimed, "you are worthy of your father, and your losses are nothing!"

"I wish I could believe so!" he replied. "But, though I hope I have ceased to be what I was, I fear I am not yet a philosopher. Still, imprudence does not necessarily lead to degeneracy, and I was

no more in danger of compromising an insult to my mother and an outrage to Miss Longland than of being won by a bribe or daunted by a threat. I have something else to talk of, for which I must admit you have less reason to be prepared. I have been busy with new plans which I feel are making me a new man. Sit down, dear mother, and hear them, and help me to persuade my only true friend here that if he gives me fresh advice I will follow it better."

There really was a change in him, for he was in better spirits, and spoke as if he had, at last, taken the trouble to think.

"I have been casting up these accounts, and have come to the conclusion that, having cut the ground from my feet, it is time to spread my wings. But not to fly away. Only to soar above the chasm. I have been thinking what I am fit for, and have no doubt my friends would suggest a sinecure, or a gold or silver stick about the Court, or a junior Lordship in the Admiralty, or some other fashionable asylum for incapables; but I prefer working like a man to taxing their interest like an imbecile, and would rather be a special constable than owe my living to special favour. Something I mean to do, though I have not meant it long enough to decide what; only—stop, dearest mother, for I know what you are going to say—certainly not to be an idler and a shame at Goldsworthy; and still less—a million times less—to listen for one moment to the sacrifice you have been planning; which I have

quite seen through, though you have not yet directly declared it. I have been wrong long enough, and you must not overwhelm me when I am right."

Crowley looked exulting in the fulfilment of his prediction, and concluded that his argument must now prevail ; but he deceived himself. Lady Goldfield looked equally so, because her previous determination had such additional reason to be steadfast. They had not time to pursue the conversation, for the servant returned to say that a gentleman was come on business to Mr. Crowley,—his name was Badger. The visit was startling, but could not have been more opportune ; and Lord Goldfield was presently left alone to solve that often very difficult question of, "What am I fit for ?" Lady Goldfield descending to find Lucy, so much the most concerned in the interview, and Crowley to learn what comfort it brought her. .

## CHAPTER VII.

THE appearance of Mr. Badger was more hearty and hopeful than might have been expected from the cause that brought him, which—as Crowley anticipated—was the woeful fate of Broome Warren. He was impatient to begin upon it, and so was his listener.

“Since I first heard of this projected sale,” he said, “my efforts have been unceasing to prevent it; but, though it has taken place in spite of them, I have reason to believe it may be set aside.”

“That were indeed a blessing; but how?”

“By another application to Chancery, for which, in certain events, in which I must warn you not to place implicit confidence, I came down to Oakendell, from whence I have been directed on, to arm myself with the sanction of Miss Longland, in whose name I must act.”

“Miss Longland! But has not all power passed away from her?”

“I don’t know yet. Hear the grounds I go upon, which have turned up in a very extraordinary

manner. The sale had hardly been concluded an hour, when a person of whom I knew nothing—a Mr. Fozzard—desired urgently to see me, and entered in great excitement. He said he had been the auctioneer on the occasion, and had found himself greatly injured and insulted by Cheek as soon as it was over. He had therefore come at once to me, whom he knew to be interested for the estate.”

“I have heard of this Fozzard—a great friend of Cheek’s, and supposed to be as great a rogue.”

“No doubt of it; and perhaps so much the better for us; for there is nobody so honest as a rogue when he quarrels with his partner. He told me he had been intimate with him for a considerable time at Broome Warren, and discovered that he had for years been contriving to lessen the apparent value of it, with a view—as he had several times hinted over his cups—of buying it himself. He could also produce witnesses who had been deterred from bidding by Cheek’s discouragement; which, coming from the agent, had naturally much influence.”

“It looks very like truth; but what can Miss Longland do when Cox has all the claim upon it? Supposing you succeed, will not the estate go to him, or be put up again?”

“Perhaps not; for when I made that observation to Fozzard, he had another singular communication to make. Cheek, being always drunk of an evening, was much in the habit of talking incautiously, and, amongst his inadvertencies, of sparing no abuse of Cox (with whom you remember his suspicious alter-

cation at my office), declaring he would not only defeat him for the estate, but ruin him into the bargain, for buying up the claims with money which did not belong to him. Connecting this assertion with the vague thoughts I expressed to you in London of some great fraud against Miss Longland, I thought we might come at the truth by alarming Moses Pinhorn, whom we believed to be in the secret, though, since I saw you, I had often tried him without obtaining it. Fortified by this new witness, I called upon him again with a new sort of application, charging him directly with collusion and confounding him with a prospect of legal proceedings, which evidently frightened him; and still more was he frightened when I referred to Cox's impending trial (which I had just learnt from Cheek's own proclamation at the sale), on which, I told him, my first step must be to summon him as a witness, and try the effect of a cross-examination. I had ventured to engage myself as Miss Longland's solicitor for the prosecution, and had brought a subpoena with me, with which I immediately served him, though Cox had already retained him for his defence. So that we shall have him in the anomalous position of witness against his own client."

"Affairs are indeed brightening; but what will you say to my addition."

Crowley then related his adventures of the last night, with the transfer of Cheek from Broome Warren Chase to Lymp-ton gaol,—the calumny

against Sir Harry Longland, the deed in his favour by the late Downton, as mentioned in Lucy's letters from her father, and enquired how far this circumstance would assist their hopes of prevailing over the Jew.

"Hopes!" cried Badger, whose wrathful energies broke out at every word. "They are more than hopes! Something cannot fail to be made out of all this to establish a confederacy of the whole party. Moses, as the intimate friend and adviser of Downton, must be the very person who drew that deed, and the acts of the other two prove that they have known as much of it as he. We'll call him against Cheek as well as Cox, and to-morrow he shall have another subpoena to be flayed alive by the sharpest counsel on the circuit. Only give me a list of your witnesses, and what they can say, and where I shall find them."

Before this could be done, however, the consultation was interrupted by the hurried entrance of Lady Goldfield, with Lucy and the Vicar, all in the greatest horror at the news they had just heard of the last night. They had, in fact, met the faithful Nelly coming up to the house to report that her father had honestly given himself up to the police, and to describe the extreme remorse and despair in which she had last seen Aaron. Altogether, she was so overcome that Mary Lightfoot had stayed to take care of her.

This put a long stop to business, and we therefore continue from the moment when Lucy, exhausted

by her agitation, was dropping calmer tears to the comforting tones of Lady Goldfield; and Mr. Bloomer was maintaining that, bring what evidence they might, his letters—his letters would settle everything.

"The letters, Roger Crowley; you forget the letters you have brought from the Vicarage."

"No, my dear sir; I have not forgotten them; but I grieve to say it is the best thing *you* can do, for Mrs. Bloomer has burnt them every one."

The old man staggered back a pace, with scarce breath enough to repeat the word "burnt!"

"Alas! every one of them! The closets that were full of them have been cleared out to make room for a brood of young Dorkings."

Mr. Bloomer's paroxysm of rage was long in finding a word big enough to annihilate his better half.

"But this," continued Crowley, taking advantage of the golden opportunity, "is not all my news. Mrs. Bloomer, sir, desires me to express her anxiety that you should not injure your health by returning home till you are quite re-established and able to enjoy it, and bids me tell you that she has turned your curate out of the house, and will not have another. I am further commissioned to say that if it is not too great a trial to you, and if you think you can console yourself for the loss of her society, she has no insuperable objection to leaving a neighbourhood where she has quarrelled with everybody, and taking up her residence with her



youthful sisters near Rosherville, where she can cheer the pains of absence by drinking tea with all the nobility of London. But it all depends upon agreement on the amount of separate maintenance."

"Agreement! Bless the dear woman, I'll agree to anything, and go a-begging! I would not stand in her way for the mitre of Canterbury! For the sake of all that's good, let her go and take care of her youthful sisters, the youngest of whom was only fifty-two last birthday. Here, my dear Mr. Wolf—no Fox—Badger, I mean—get a sheet of paper, write what you like, and I'll sign it. Anything to please her—anything!"

If any of his hearers had been in a mirthful mood the Vicar's eager generosity might have raised some indecorous demonstration of it; but all had too much cause for gravity, and persuaded him to take breath and consider.

"Consider! I have considered! I've been considering ever since I was married, and that's long enough. Come to my room, Mr. Fox, and I'll lie down and tell you all I am worth, and you can draw out the separate maintenance before I tumble down in another fit. Give the dear woman plenty! The more she gets the sooner she'll be off. Plenty, plenty! an annuity to Jim Crow into the bargain!"

Mr. Badger looked amused.

"I thought," he said, "that you did not know me. You need not tell me what you are worth, for

I understand your affairs as well and perhaps better than you do yourself."

The Vicar looked bewildered.

"You forget that, years ago in Sir Harry's time, we often met at Broome Warren; and that, years after that date, you applied to me to draw your marriage settlement."

"You don't say so?"

"I think I can help your memory; for though we lawyers cannot always recollect the particulars of our various transactions without reference, I have a particular recollection of your case, because there were peculiar difficulties with the trustee on Mrs. Bloomer's part, another of our fraternity, and a pretty sharp one."

"Who—who was he?"

"Mrs. Bloomer's father, who would have insisted upon the settlement of every farthing you possessed had it not been for the determined resistance of the friend on your own part; a very gentlemanly man who came from France for the special purpose."

"France? Was he a parson?"

"I believe he was; and, now I remember, he said he had charge of an English chapel there."

"At Boulogne! Was it at Boulogne?"

"That was the place. But why so much astonishment?"

"His name? His name?"

"His name was Seymour."

The Vicar almost leaped from the ground.

"Jubilate!" he cried, "we have it! we have it!"

Seymour is the man! I must be off to Boulogne! now! this minute!"

"Uncle," cried Lucy, in fresh terrors. "Be calm; you must not agitate yourself!"

"I'm not agitated, not a bit! Get me a carriage. I can't stay! A fig for the correspondence! Here's the man himself!"

"There is no need for such haste," interposed Mr. Badger, "what is the vast importance of Mr. Seymour?"

"Tell him, Lucy, tell him, Roger Crowley. Wasn't he at Boulogne? and wasn't Harry Longland there too?"

"Yes, uncle; but you do not know that they were there at the same time?"

"I must go and find out. I must find out."

"But you know they could not have been," reasoned Crowley, "or you would have learnt everything you desire from Mr. Seymour when he came to you in London."

"No, I say; no! How should I? He was only a college friend, and knew no more of my family than I did of his. He was only here for a day or two, and was all the time persuading me not to marry. Oh, he was a wise man; a clever fellow! If I had only taken his advice!"

"Uncle, if you go, I will go too."

"And so, sir, will I."

But he would not hear a word of it. Perhaps it was the provocation of his lost letters; perhaps it was the verification of the Goody Two-Shoes dogma

that when old gentlemen become fractious, they are getting well; but he certainly had more of his senses about him than anybody gave him credit for.

"Ain't you both witnesses at the assizes?" he cried, impatiently; "and how can you get away? I have no evidence to give, and must go and look for it. Don't talk. I won't hear."

"Only a word, my dear sir. If Mr. Seymour was such a wise man, how can you hope he would stay at Boulogne all his life?"

"Clever fellows often do foolish things. I did one myself,—heaven help me out of it! If I had nothing else to take me away, I must go to town to sign this provision for Mrs. Bloomer and Jim Crow; and my friend Tiger and I can call upon all the Seymours in the Court Guide."

"Do not press him," whispered Lady Goldfield. "He is too much excited, and we may do mischief."

Then turning to the Vicar, who was already buttoning up his coat, she applauded him for maintaining his resolution.

"But you know, Mr. Bloomer, it is too late to go to-day, and Mr. Badger has business that will at least keep him till to-morrow, which will give you time to make proper arrangements."

"Yes,—true; there's sense in that. Your ladyship is the only person who never did a foolish thing, or said it either. I leave it all to you. I can't bear opposition. I must go and lie down."

With which he tottered out of the room, sup-

ported by Lucy and Crowley, though he was only tottering from his towering rage.

Lady Goldfield took advantage of their absence.

"Mr. Badger," she said, "you were some time ago apprised by Mr. Crowley of the great misfortune in my family, and I wish you much, before you leave us, to look over the demands which have been made on my son. I fear there are no means of averting our complete ruin, though he tells me the utmost he has received for his notes of hand is forty thousand pounds."

"Alas, Lady Goldfield—to my deep sorrow I say it—the question is not what we have received, but what we have acknowledged. Here is the old practice which ruins half the finest fortunes in the land. Your money-lender is a keen lawyer in his own calling, and can safely swear that he never asks more than legal interest; but the conditions of the so-called accommodation oblige the unthinking borrower to admit amounts far different, corresponding with his necessities and his trust in the chances of the gaming-table or the race course. He is thus placed beyond the reach of help. There is his receipt in his own writing; and to make his ruin greater, his appeal for justice very often causes the world to bestow its sympathies on the wrong side."

"My poor boy! He knew not what he was doing. He has been led on by his confidence in friendship and honour where he now finds nothing that is human. Is there no hope to be placed in

the exposure of this person on his trial for other crimes?"

"I cannot tell. Stranger things have happened, but I must not encourage hopes that may prove deceptive. The trial will soon take place, and till then we must keep up our courage."

"Heaven has enabled me to do so by placing in my hands the means of rescue."

"To some extent Lord Goldfield is protected by the law. As a peer of the realm his liberty is safe, and his estate is no doubt entailed."

"I know it; but such immunities formed no part of my husband's pride. He would have been the last to avail himself of any privilege not shared by all alike; and I have no ambition in life but to be guided by his memory, and feel the higher we are placed the more we are bound to be just."

"But your ladyship forgets that these claims are not just."

"You say we cannot prove them otherwise; and what the law calls just is just in the eyes of the world. To be poor and respected is to be rich and happy, and with that I am content; therefore I ask you to help me."

"Be pleased only to tell me in what way."

"It is, I think, an easy one. I want first to know the exact extent of my son's obligations, and then some experienced person from London to make a fair estimate of the value of this place. I hope it may prove high enough to set him free. I apply to you," and she spoke almost with gaiety to quiet

a slight quiver in the old man's countenance, "because men of business have no right to sympathies, which only lead to partial advice. I began this subject with Mr. Crowley, but found we had been friends a great deal too long. With you it is all future, and there is nothing to prevent a good beginning. Will you begin by making this commission a profound secret, and doing it without delay?"

"Lady Goldfield, you are used to be obeyed more cheerfully. Persons of my profession see much of character. But I find we have something yet to learn."

"You must not waste your praise upon a client who defies counsel. If you knew how light I make of this business you would do it more readily than the poor Vicar's marriage settlement. There is but one thing that would vex me in its execution, and that would be any knowledge of it amongst my friends and neighbours before it is completed. I would go away, as it should seem, to pass the winter in some warmer climate—Italy, or anywhere else, I have no preference; for pity and condolence of such a nature would be hard to bear, and might create some unforeseen regret for a change which, at present, I view with nothing but pleasure. The child will laugh or cry at its nursery tale in accordance with the tone in which it is told, and I would not run the risk of being carried back to the foot of the hill when I am travelling half-way down on the opposite side. Therefore

you must be very secret, and very quick. You do not refuse?"

"No, madam; there is not a savage in creation who could refuse you anything. Give me a moment—let me think. I wish this could be witnessed by a thoughtless generation who are daily purchasing the applause of the profligate at a like expense."

"Have done, I pray."

"Have patience with me. Since I cannot control your course, I must do my best to smooth it. Your proposal of a land surveyor will not answer your purpose. You would confide it to a third person on whom you might less depend for silence."

"Then how would you amend it?"

Mr. Badger made a long pause to consider, during which he might have been thought to have more plans than he spoke of.

"Lady Goldfield," he proceeded, "you have only to look at the advertisements in any newspaper to see the rapid vicissitudes of our grandest properties—heirlooms from our grandest families, transferred to new possessors—degraded, subdivided, and no more heard of; and this too often for causes which strain my fortitude, though borne so serenely by your own—a headlong madness, driven by a few demons whose profession is to grease the wheels of ruin. With some of these my practice has too often brought me in contact. They know when the tide is at ebb or flow, correctly as a cormorant. *Whose purse is empty, and*



*whose* is full; *who* has the birthright to sell, and *who* has the mess of pottage to purchase; *who* is in despair, and *who* is flushed with a short-lived ambition. Many of the greatest transfers are made at their offices, and they are the likeliest persons I know to accomplish this one with the expedition you desire. But I cannot deal with them till you oblige me with your title-deeds."

"They are at my bankers'."

"Then please to give me an order for them."

Lady Goldfield wrote and delivered it as if it had been a happy receipt for all that it cast away; and presently Crowley returned with the not unwelcome news that he had prevailed on Lucy to offer no farther opposition to the wild project of her uncle; provided Mr. Badger could promise her that he should be carefully watched over. The condition was of course heartily conceded.

"Let Miss Longland place full confidence in the care of her father's old friend. Mr. Bloomer shall be well looked after, both by me and my family, with whom he will be safely lodged, and he will be well out of the way of the anxieties you will have here till after the assizes, for which you will all need all your thoughts and all your time for preparation."

The rest of the day was passed in a careful examination of Lucy's packet and Lord Goldfield's notes of hand, with many other necessary arrangements; and on the next morning the lawyer took his leave, with the resolute old Vicar, brim full of

importance, and drowning all sounds of lamentation by his confidence that now he was once more a bachelor, and the right man in the right place, everything must needs go right.

## CHAPTER VIII.

WHILST the greater events of our history are in abeyance we must attend to some of the smaller ones, which are not without their consequence, though, at first sight, they may seem rather episodic.

It was not many hours since Goose Green had been as little known to fame as fame to its geese; but, the day after the battle, we beheld that Deity, pen in hand, writing a cheque for it on the Bank of Immortality, the provincial correspondent of which was the County Chronicle. The cheque was duly honoured, and pilgrims, not barefooted nor clad in sackcloth, repaired to the scene in streams of fine carriages and fine feathers from every quarter of the globe, which happened to be within twenty miles.

The public mind, in these parts, had never before been in such a state of fermentation. Memorial hunters collected relics from the site of the haystack and the mansion of Green Lane's End. Artists from illustrated newspapers sketched every scrap of

the neighbourhood ; and Broome Warren Chase, and the Rosary, and the ruins were all of them as exactly like as Wales to Macedon. Portraits were equally happy, and those of James Crowley, Esquire, and the lovely Lucy Longland may be seen in young ladies' albums to this day. There also may be seen the picturesque figures of Mrs. Bloomer and Commodore Bunckle making horrible faces through the chink in the barn ; there two demoniacs loading a blunderbus over a sepulchral tin box ; and there the battle of Goose Green with the fiery charge and lamentable fall of Captain Drinkwater.

There was only one omission on the part of our deity, and this, we regret to say, may prove very much to our loss ; for he gave us no list of the visitors. The élite of society are, on all great occasions, accustomed to see their names in print, and we have heard they are sometimes a little indignant when they do not. Everybody knows the power of patronymics in converting sheets of lead into charming little oblongs of silver paper ; and there is no saying how such magical influence might have affected ourselves. Unhappily, our acquaintance was too limited to fill up the blank ; for, indeed, we hardly knew anybody but Mrs. Toogood's ladies of the bed-chamber, reconnoitring with the drummer and fifer in the suite of Miss Betsy, who was dislocating her delicate shoulder to reach the arm of Sergeant Anak.

Miss Betsy was turning up her innocent face so precisely as if she were looking up at a church

clock, that our eyes naturally followed it, when we made another conjecture that she must be trying to make out the meaning of some mystical figures in the sergeant's foraging cap. There was a 6, and there was a 7, and a large F, and a small t, which might have had relation either to his altitude, as six feet seven, or the number of his regiment, as sixty-seventh foot. But as she made no enquiries, our farther conjecture was, that she must be studying something beneath those hieroglyphics; and, truth to say, there was something there which very often engages the attention of young ladies. Years later, we found a strong resemblance to Sergeant Anak in Mr. Chang, the Chinese giant, whom the last edition of Nature's Book of Beauty (particularly the duodecimo one), pronounced to be as handsome a man as ever looked out of the moon. Cupid then, in Miss Betsy's case, might have been making one of those overhead shots which battue sportsmen are so proud of bringing down, and seemed to have made no miss. There was no doubt of it; for the said Cupid had strong reasons for bagging the big sergeant. Miss Betsy was to be examined at the assizes in connection with certain borrowed letters, and she could hardly have forgotten who had borrowed them. It could, likewise, hardly be doubted that she might think it more pleasurable to pursue her next adventures in a new field; and as that of Mercury had proved dangerous, there might be more security under the shield of Mars.

There was plenty of time to make her election,

for Mrs. Toogood had been too much frightened to be in any hurry about breaking up her garrison, and the garrison was in no hurry to leave her exposed in times of danger. They, moreover, approved of the cellar and the fascinations of the servants' hall, where the young ladies danced in admirable time to the notes of the fife, and listened in ecstasies to the choice military chorus of "Blankets and pins." It may be thought that such festivities were somewhat in opposition to Mrs. Toogood's household discipline; but they were quite the reverse, for she was convinced of their correctness by the cogent reason that nobody else was, and very proud of doing her duty by our brave defenders.

And thus went on the better part of a week, during the first days of which Mrs. Toogood had completed the outfit of her parish favourites, and supervised the numerous emigration, with Mrs. Crimp at its head, as matron. Never were prospects so happy, both at home and abroad, for when Justice Bulfinch and the Board saw the waggon loads depart they felt the next event could be nothing less than the end of a wicked world; and Mrs. Crimp and her interesting charge all went off screaming, in the intoxication of transport, how her blessed Honour should hear of them in heaven as soon as they got there.

The week's end was more marked than the beginning. It wanted but one more, and a day or two, to the assizes, and pretty Betsy began to look fidgety. The millennium being quite assured, Ser-

geant Anak received orders to join his regiment, for immediate embarkation to Canada, and Betsy had been too charmed with tales of war to see much attraction in a thousand years of peace. Mrs. Toogood had indeed promised her a monopoly of all the good counsels she had hitherto lavished upon the happy souls who had gone off for the admiration of distant lands ; but Betsy was not covetous, and felt that she would rather leave such benefits to those who were more in want. The sweet strains of the fife and a dear friend to look up to, as she pensively confided to Sergeant Anak during the last festival, were all the happiness she desired. And then, when Mr. Corks had eloquently proposed the last toast to His Majesty's forces and their next meeting, and all the company became sentimental, she rose with a nervous twitch in one eye-lid, observed by no one but the sergeant, to pack up his knapsack, and put her mistress to bed. Strange little innocent ! What could make her so absent ? What could she be thinking of when she mixed so many articles of her own wardrobe in that packing ? And what could she mean by laughing herself into fits !

The next morning, when Mrs. Toogood rang to be dressed, Miss Betsy did not hear the bell. She rang again and again, and still there was no appearance ; till, at last, the infirm old cook hobbled up stairs, and knocked at the door.

"Why, what has become of Betsy ?" asked her excellent mistress.

"Dear heart alive, ma'am, I'm afeared to tell you! She's gone away!"

"Gone away!" repeated Mrs. Toogood. "What do you mean?"

"Yes, ma'am; clean gone away, before daylight! Lawk a mercy! who'd ha' thought it! She that always seemed so pretty behaved and so modest, as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth! And all your own bringing up too, ma'am. She's gone away with them sodgers! And so's the house-maid, and so's my kitchen-maid! and so, I durst to say, would ha' gone the dairy-maid and the laundress, if one hadn't squinted with both eyes, and the other been all of a twist with turning the mangle! I'm sure, ma'am, I hope you'll never have no more sodgers, or heaven knows what will become of you and me! Poor Mr. Corks and John the footman are a knocking the powder out of their heads, and counting the silver spoons, but nothing is took; nothing but a round of beef and a turkey, and a tongue, and a cold saddle of mutton; and the rest of the larder which they eat for breakfast."

Poor Mrs. Toogood. "Did nobody see them? did nobody hear what they said for themselves?"

"Oh dear no, ma'am; it was all done long afore we was up, and nobody 'll never hear no more of 'em, for they're gone to the Indies. Here's a letter, ma'am, as is just come by the post, and I'm sure I hope it brings you better news, for they've writ immediate upon it."

Everything was alarming,—worse than the



battle of Goose Green. And what was the letter? A despatch from the Emigration Society, with tidings worse and worse. All the select consignments, with their admirable characters, had no sooner embarked at the Tower Stairs, than they took to the sailors just as kindly as the other young ladies had taken to the soldiers, and made themselves so popular that the captain had been obliged to clear decks at the Isle of Dogs. Mrs. Crimp, the matron, had been the worst of all, and carried off her charges to corrupt the comparatively good people of Billingsgate and Wapping. The Society, therefore, desired to give notice of a separate action in each case for recovery of the usual penalties, against Mrs. Toogood, for false characters and gross imposition.

Fifty-three lawsuits all at once! Mrs. Toogood's head, wise as it was, turned round and round like the spindle of the Fates, though, unlike them, it had spun a destiny for herself. Yes, she was destined to spin out of her mind.

"Lauk, ma'am! Lauk a dear! We thought it was something of that kind, for Mr. Bulfinch has just been here, and I never see a gentleman so angry in all my life, for that 'ere Crimp gal has just sent him her two babbies in a hamper to take care of for her sake."

Mr. Bulfinch and the deputation to triumph over her! Her reputation for wisdom was gone for ever! Good advice, throughout the sphere of her dispensation, at a discount below zero!

"If you please, Mrs. Cook," said Mr. Corks from

the top of the stairs, "be so good as tell missis here's another babby come for Mr. Soap from her emigraters, and he wants to know what he's to do with it."

"If you please, Mr. Corks," called the wheezy footman from the foot of the stairs, "be so good as tell Mrs. Cook to tell missis here's Mrs. Bloomer below as says she has diskivered it was her sweep and ratcatcher as stole the game cock, and she's agoing to have her afore the justices for sending of 'em out of the way."

"Turn her out of the house!" shrieked Mrs. Toogood, who could endure no more. "Send her about her business! Shut up the doors, and call in Dr. Choke! Woe, woe to the two or three who would set the world to rights, for what can they do against a generation that is born to go wrong! If anybody comes for advice, tell them I will never give another word to any human being!"

It was a rash resolution, and very soon to be broken; for Miss Betsy was under the necessity of retiring from the army on her first march. Crowley had been to the village as often as he had a spare hour to hear what tidings had been obtained of Aaron or the vanished box, and on some of these occasions he had made observations on the young lady which caused him to doubt whether he might strictly rely upon the pleasure of seeing her at Lymp-ton. He had therefore made a little arrangement with the sergeant of a force less attractive than that of Sergeant Anak to keep his eye upon

her, and escort her carefully on the day appointed, which arrangement included a small document in the king's name, to be used or not as might be necessary. Now this sergeant belonged to the mounted police, and no sooner did he hear, on taking his round by the Rosary, that Miss Betsy had followed the drum, than he trotted off to his station and slung his saddlebags behind him, so as to make a very comfortable pillion, and then off he trotted again for some miles, when he came up with the happy party, and sorely discomposed them by the production of his credentials. Betsy screamed for protection to Sergeant Anak; but Sergeant Anak was a good soldier, and a faithful liege of King William the Fourth, and though he had marched far enough to digest his breakfast and could have eaten the other sergeant for his luncheon, he could not swallow that little bit of paper. He looked on His Majesty's envoy as the son of Peleus might have looked on those from the king of men, and then he looked upon Briseis.

"Damme, my girl," he said tenderly, "this is a bad job. We must obey the king, or I shall have a court martial."

Betsy wept on his bosom, or rather in his waistcoat pocket, which she could just reach, and screamed worse and worse—for every word was high treason—that she did not care a button for the king, and Serjeant Snuggs might tell him so.

But the parley between the leaders of the two

forces was more loyal. The red-coat was satisfied that reason sided with the blue, and, knocking out the ashes from his pipe, unstrapped his knapsack to transfer a dainty little bundle to the saddle bags. Then, comforting his pretty rebel with a malediction on his eyes if he should ever forget her, or be away from her one day beyond seven years, he seated her kicking on the palm of his hand to perch her, like a little bird, on the croup of the enemy's charger, and cautioned her mournfully to hold tight by the gentleman's girth.

"Good bye, Miss Betsy," cried the other two ladies, well satisfied that the charger was not chartered to carry four. "'Fraid you'll catch it; but never mind, for you know it's only for seven years."

Sergeant Anak's sensibilities could stand no more. He thundered out "left shoulders forward. Strike up the ' Girl I Left Behind me ! ' March !"

Loud and shrill were the drum and fife; the steed snorted and plunged off at full gallop, and Betsy fluttered and carolled like a skylark till she vanished in the distance.

Poor little captive! But matters were not so bad as they seemed. The Sergeant of Police was a good-natured fellow, and, moreover, a good-looking one, with a happy knack at comforting damsels in distress; peculiar, as we have heard, to his painful profession. As soon as he could rein up, he turned a pleasant wink over his shoulder.

"Whisht, my dear," he said, kindly, "don't you take on so. It was no fault of yours, you understand, if those chaps carried you off by force, no more nor it would have been of Miss Longland's, when the sailors tried it on upon her as the sodgers have upon you. How was you to suspect, when the tother gals asked you to take a walk this fine morning, that they was in league with 'em, and what could you do against half a dozen that came up of a sudden with that giant at their head? I heard you screaming, and that I can swear to, long afore I overtook you; and it was nothing but the sight of my cutlash that made 'em give you up. Stick to that, and then Mrs. Toogood can only advise you never to go out o' sight of the Police."

What a capital hint! Betsy wiped her eyes and almost smiled.

"That's the very truth of it, Mr. Snuggs; just as if you had seen every bit of it."

"To be sure it is, my dear, and in course I'll tell missis so; unless you've had enough of her and would rather come with me and pretend to be locked up at the station. We're very sociable there, and I'm sure I'd do my best to make you comfortable. But then again, it don't look so well to be locked up; and, as I've orders to look pretty sharp after you, I could come to the Rosary at breakfast, dinner, and supper time, just to see if you was there you know."

"And so you could, I declare!" and Betsy smiled a little more, and looked all the prettier. "I don't

care which I do; but pray, if you please, don't make me ride through the village!"

"No, no; in course not. You jump down and run home, and tell everybody you meet what a narrow escape you've had. And don't think no more about sodgers, for they're only birds of passage, and the police is stationary."

"Oh, I hate the very sight of a red coat! Don't, please, remind me of the dreadful danger you saved me from! I shall never feel myself safe when you are not by. We dine at two o'clock precise. But how about my bundle?"

"Why, you was a-taking it to the wash, in course, and was so frightened that you've brought it back."

"In course! So I was! I forgot that," and down she jumped, with a merry laugh at her great want of memory.

"Hey!" called the Sergeant, as she flitted away with her baggage, "what time is breakfast and supper?"

"Half-past eight in the morning and nine at night. Mind you are punctual."

The Sergeant winked, and Betsy got home, almost dead with agitation at the dreadful fate from which she had been so providentially rescued.

We must not do her new admirer the injustice to suppose that his capture of Miss Betsy was achieved solely with a view to her pleasant society and its perquisites, though these may have added some

alacrity to his long trot. He was gifted with a fair share of intelligence, and quite understood that her evidence was most material against Cox on the charge of purloining Lucy's letters. Indeed, now that Aaron was gone, she was the only one to be relied on; for, though there was no want of witnesses respecting their recovery, there was no one else to prove that Aaron had been employed by his master. He had shown some interest connected with the history of Lucy, irrespective of Cox, and it might have suited him to get possession of them to that end. The Sergeant was also the more proud of his prize from having heard, during his attendance on another petty session, that the Bench felt much uncertainty about a conviction on the abduction case. It might have been that every old gentleman thought he could have managed it better himself, but they all agreed in doubting the evidence and the effect of a commitment by a very young magistrate who was known to be not much less concerned in a conviction than the young lady herself. What a pity he had acted so hastily, and not remanded the prisoner before heads more experienced! And the experienced heads shook themselves wisely, and shook out all allowance for the emergency. We may add that they also shook out a great deal of confidence from Crowley's, for most people would have grown nervous in proportion to the nearer approach of events involving so much. He had been calculating his strength

to meet the demand for it more uneasily every day.

Lucy could testify to nothing but an attempt to enter the house, as none had actually been made to carry her off. Their brave landlady had not seen Cox till he was committed, and what she knew of his intentions was only gathered from Bunckle in a state of drunkenness. In Bunckle himself there was small hope, for it would be apparent that he had turned traitor to his employer to escape his own share of the consequences. Then, on the robbery of the letters, he felt with the Sergeant that his chief hope rested upon Miss Betsy, who might be thought the greater culprit of the two.

There was not less discomfort in regard to Cheek, for though few doubts could be entertained of his guilt, there were a great many of his conviction. The evidence of Mrs. Bloomer would perhaps go for nothing, in consequence of her well-known enmity and random gabble of whatever malice came uppermost. The prepossession against Bunckle would be the same here as in the case against Cox ; and though the gun, which had belonged to Sir Harry, was a strong feature, a jury might hesitate whether it had not been stolen, as alleged ; for Aaron, who had not shrunk from attempting murder, would invite suspicion of anything else. As for the two or three policemen, they were but a raw material in that day, and looked upon with great caution long after from notable examples of a strong propensity to



make the most of whatever fell into their hands; in addition to which they had nothing to speak of but a conversation in a storm which they confessed to have been deafening. The most important hope of all rested upon Moses Pinhorn; but this was another case, and, unfortunately, only a case of conjecture.

Such were the desponding expectations in all quarters when a letter came from Mr. Badger, on the day before the assizes, to demolish the small faith that had been placed in the Vicar's great dependence on his friend, the Boulogne clergyman, who was found to have gone away some years ago. This itself would have been no serious addition to the misgivings at Goldsworthy; but what could be said of the lawyer's conclusion? Mr. Bloomer, without a word of notice or any assignable cause, and without seeming to have made the slightest provision for such a step, had disappeared and not been heard of for five days! Persons innumerable had been sent after him; some to represent the dire effects of such hallucinations at Goldsworthy; some to arrest him as an escaped lunatic, and, if he was still deaf to common sense, to bring him back in a straight waistcoat; but nobody could find or hear of him. As a last resource, Mr. Badger was driven most reluctantly to inquire if he had wandered back to the country; reluctantly, because he knew that if he was not there, the tidings must be a shock that would render Lucy's appearance at the trials almost hopeless. His

fears bade fair to be justified; but nobody could have estimated her courage in defence of her father. Her state was pitiable; but, instead of disabling, it raised her to an effort scarce credible in one so young, so delicate, and so unhappy.

## CHAPTER IX.

IT was grievous for Crowley to look upon these accumulating trials without the power of affording the faintest clue out of them or offering a word of reasonable comfort; for the urgent necessity for his presence at home to attend to the details of the doubtful event before him, made it impossible to be again absent. Nothing of course was omitted in the way of advertisement and reward and constant communication with London, but days passed without any result beyond their wasting effects on the looks to which he could bring no cheer. The neighbourhood, assisted by the desponding agencies we have noticed, was ringing with the ruined case of Goldfield, and the fading Lucy was reported to be in a state too precarious to proceed with it. The Vicar was regarded, for the time, with more reproach than he ever deserved for past delinquencies, and his foremost accuser was the partner he had taken for no better but a great deal worse. Mrs. Bloomer would indeed have been one of Crowley's

greatest perplexities had he not been too busy to heed her. After waiting a few impatient days for the fulfilment of his undertaking to rejoice her with a separate maintenance she became exasperated to no common display of betrayed confidence. She had trusted her interests to a base pretender to her thanks, made all her arrangements in conformity, apprised all her London friends, especially her delighted young sisters who looked up to her with such love and admiration, and was now to become an object of pity and the slave of expectation to a wicked old man who had monopolised the bloom of her life, and no doubt intended to be never more forthcoming till the day of judgment.

Under this provocation of intolerable wrong she had dispatched a daily representation of her state, in the unimpeachable style that we have already admired, to the great agent of deception—the false Mr. Crowley, all more energetic than the last, because the last was never answered, and finally she convinced herself that she had a legal claim to redress, and beset him with the prancing caco-demons of other days who had succeeded to the practice of her eminent father, the late Mr. Liptrot, Attorney-General and Secretary of State for the Board of Guardians. These gentlemen being rather in want of profitable occupation for occasional leisure hours, employed themselves unremittingly in obeying her commands, and no doubt the reader would derive great improvement from the perusal of their correspondence, but as Crowley sent it all

home again it only lives in our lamentations, from which we turn to the movements of the principal aggressor, Mr. Bloomer.

Mr. Bloomer then, as after investigation informed us, had cherished plans of his own, which he kept, as a man has a right to do with his own, entirely for his own use : and these plans were to run away from Mr. Badger on the first occasion that offered after they left Goldsworthy. It did not occur till some days had been spent in fruitless inquiries for news of Mr. Seymour wherever there was a chance of obtaining it; nevertheless, the Vicar was in no wise discouraged. No one could look more cheerful, and he received the compliments of Mr. Badger and his family on being greatly improved since his removal from the country; so apparent was this that they did not think it necessary to keep up that strict *surveillance* which they had observed at first, and he took his walks and amused himself with the freedom of other people; gradually using the household to his absence for hours at a time.

The absence one day was longer than it had been before, and some uneasiness was caused by his not returning to dinner, a family ceremony at which he had hitherto made it a point to be punctual. He was equally remiss at the tea table, and the uneasiness became an alarm which lasted all night. The next day began the search we have mentioned, and the next and the next informed town and country that the Rev. Mr. Bloomer had absconded. The first apprehension was that he had been run over in

the streets, and when it was assured that no one had suffered from that mishap, and that Guy's and Bartholomew's had no clerical importation from the country, it was doubted whether the temptations of Mr. Cheek's black bottle, so long resisted, had again beset him from some palace on the pleasant road to repentance. But no backsliding of this nature appeared against him, and no contradiction to the first surprise that he had been guilty of

"A truant disposition, good, my Lord."

The Vicar's memory had served to furnish his pocket with a good supply of money, though he forgot everything else that is considered necessary for an outfit; and so he began the pursuit of his own opinion, like the sportsman who follows his fly in the Hymalayas with a very cautious regard for the tiger that sometimes makes one of the company. He directed his course to the eastward, and after dodging round a multitude of corners and crooked alleys, began to peer cunningly into the small shops by the way till he found himself not far from the Thames, and here he speedily lighted upon the particular shop he wanted, which was a retail establishment for ready-made apparel.

"They'll be sure to advertise me," he thought, "and then they may catch the happy person who wears my clothes."

With that he made acquaintance with the merchant, who, in these parts, always stands at his door to welcome customers as he did in the day

of the Tudors, and informed him that he was going to take a little sail down the river and should be glad of some more substantial costume and permission to leave his own till called for. Being invited in with that abundant politeness which is usual in the prospect of a good bargain, and the surprise of a first transaction with a gentleman, he was bowed into an inner warehouse, where in great haste and agitation he disrobed himself, and was presently studying his transformation into a small skipper or captain of a collier. It was no bad precaution to make a careful survey, in order to be quite sure of himself whenever the time came to resume that character. The Hebrew gentleman—for we are again amongst the tribes—tenderly folded the discarded suit and locked it up; and what was very remarkable, declined to take payment for that which he had supplied, till the excellent gentleman should come back to resume his own. Mr. Bloomer was amazed at his simplicity and confidence in a stranger, who might never come back at all; but his scruples were overpowered by the pride of the honest man in having so worthy a customer on his books. He then begged to be directed to a place from which the vessels sailed for France, and was courteously guided to the Tower stairs, from whence the ‘*Bien Aimée*’ was just about to drop down with the tide. The honest dealer was anxious that his excellent customer should not miss his passage, and made him step out as fast as he could, till he wished

him good-morning by the side of a boat of some fifty or sixty tons, taking in sundries for Calais. It was just what he wanted, for he had geography enough to remember that Boulogne was not far beyond the landing, and he was rejoiced to think that he should certainly hear something of Mr. Seymour the next day, and prove himself what everybody else had doubted, the right man in the right place.

The 'Bien Aimée' was rigged as a cutter, and manned by four men and a boy, including the captain. It had a small cabin—a perfect nosegay—and contained half-a-dozen berths, two of which were engaged by mankind of some sort, a third by a pleasant-looking dame from the refined side of the Channel, of an age we may call tender, because it is always the most tenderly touched on, and a fourth was very much at the service of the new applicant, who having no venture but the venture of his person, no language in common but the little French he had learnt at school, some sixty years ago, and no regard directed to anything but the faces on shore, was very soon established as a monsieur, who had no desire for investigation; which was more confirmed by the incongruity of the dress and the wearer, who could not refrain from surveying himself in the water with a doubt as to which of the crowd he might be. The other two berths were waiting for occupants; but, as nobody came, the captain only delayed till there was no tide to help him out of the river, and then he hoisted sail—the rule with



"*nous autres François*," being always to be in à hurry, but never in time.

The eyes of Mr. Bloomer, now that he was relieved from one sort of apprehension, began to twinkle about him, and very soon hit upon another. The '*Bien Aimée*' had not cleared the crowded shipping before it was evident that she had a will of her own, and no respect for the rudder,—that her ropes were rotten, and her sails tied up with knots,—and that her whole and sole dependence was in the

"Sweet little cherub that sits up aloft."

She had not proceeded far when the wind, which began to freshen from the Essex meadows, began to offer unpleasant comments, with the reservation of a few more at sea. But the crew and the company made themselves comfortable, and chattered away, for our French friends have exclaimed "*C'est égal*," too often to doubt its charm over all the perils of life, and never think of being afraid till it is too late.

Nor was the Vicar more afraid than the rest of anything but a mooring on the mud, and the sort of passengers that might chance to follow in the next steamboat. As long as he went glibly he was brimful of exultation and would have been the merriest soul in the conversation if he had understood it. In proportion, however, to the progress of his voyage, and the diminution of his terrors of pursuit, he so far amended in this respect that a

few words—which at first were no tongue in particular—stole over his memory, and afforded an occasional guess at his meaning; ere long they became sufficient to carry him through the continental catechism of whether he was married or single, and how many children he had, and other matters of equal interest, to which all foreigners lend so attentive an ear. But though, with his brisk spirits, which appeared to rise with the wind, he improved in popularity, he certainly lost ground in estimation. It was clear he had hung back at first from fear of being questioned too closely, and that his restless watch on all sides had been occasioned by apprehension. There was some privately expressed curiosity to know what monsieur could have done, but foreigners are generally more liberal than Englishmen in such respects, and have seldom any serious concern for offences which are not notorious.

Thus matters went on sociably enough till the night was coming on, and the tempers of most people would have run restive at the Captain's delay at starting, when they saw themselves only just rounding the first bluff to the sea. Here the party soon became restive enough, for the warning which they slighted in the morning, when there might have been time to expostulate, came again to remind them that their Captain was improvised for the occasion, and only promoted because he, in common with many of his gifted nation, considered himself fit for every emergency. Being active about nothing

and noisy about everything, which often inspires great confidence, he was Captain enough for the poor souls who committed themselves to his seamanship till he found a bold breeze from the North Sea charging him on the back of a roaring white horse, with an awful troop of white horses in the rear. The sail of the 'Well Beloved' was struck hard enough to lay her half under the water, and the swagger was carried away by the same puff, and Mons. le Capitaine danced about the deck to enquire of his crew what on earth he should do. The crew clattered over each other with a firm opinion that he would never do anything on earth again, for they were, in fact, not over-well qualified to advise. Having been relieved from the vigilant eyes of their more experienced Commander they had allowed themselves free access to a brandy cask, which stood upon tressels between the steerage and the compass, as if one were as needful as the other, and were half seas over in a double sense; and there was a confused cry of all who had a right to know nothing about the matter of "haul in the boom and down with the mainsail," but the boom would not come when they hauled, and the steersman ran from his rudder to help an inane old creature, who had sunk to a sitting posture because he could not stand, and was choking with brandy and tobacco juice. Their united efforts were not enough to straighten the rope, and were quite as useless when the two French passengers rolled forward to lend assistance, for the first curvet on salt water waves

had turned their heads like all the rest, whilst the lady was tumbling to and fro at the risk of being dashed into a new constellation. The Vicar, feeble as he was, never lost his presence of mind, for his mission was too mighty to suffer a thought for himself. He saw that the good ship was galloping with all her might for the coast of Kent, and that in a few minutes she would land all her freight in the hands of his pursuers, so he seized the helm to keep her away and galloped just as fast towards the sands off Margate. But he did better than this, for he collared the boy, a lad of about fifteen, and the best sailor on board, whilst he was running everywhere and shouting "*Nous mourrons!*"

"Hullo, you boy," he cried, "why don't they let down that peaked sail at the masthead?" The boy answered that it would not come, because the halliards would not run.

"Don't you remember that you tied it up in a knot before we sailed? Up with your knife and cut it down!"

It was a dangerous service, for the peak was fearfully aslant over the waves; but the boy was nimble as desperation could make him, and performed his evolution. Down came the mainsail with all the rattling rings of the mast, the heavy spar thundering on the deck, with unaccountable mercy on the limbs beneath; and the 'Well Beloved' immediately slackened speed and flapped her boom like a bird with a broken wing. The two landsmen strained their sinews till the wreck was

shipped, and then, having nothing strainable but their stomachs, rolled down to the cabin, whilst Madam, who would rather have rolled overboard, held fast by the Vicar, who, in his turn, held fast by the faith that he had no danger to dread by sea whilst Fate had so much need of him on dry land. His only fear for water was the fear of having too little, and as the Captain still tore his hair and screamed for advice he advised him strongly to heave the lead. The Captain, having never heard of such a thing, had not thought of it, and called upon St. Francis and all the saints of his acquaintance to find it for him. After searching all the lockers on board the saints or somebody else rummaged it out, and then it proved to be a bullet on a ball of pack thread, probably a fishing line, which in such a whirl of wind and tide, was less likely to sink than the good ship herself. The only alternative of the brave old Parson, whose undismayed bearing had established a sudden faith in his pea-jacket, was obeyed without dispute when he insisted on letting go the anchor. Down it went and out ran the cable with a rush that threatened to snap it as soon as it came to an end. It came to an end with a fearful jolt but without the dreaded catastrophe, and the 'Bien Aimée' stood upright, like a colt in his first lunging.

"God be praised," exclaimed the new commanding officer. "If it only holds I shouldn't be surprised if we were saved after all!"

The condition of their safety was very uncertain,

and, if the wind should chance to strengthen, very much against them, of which the helpless captain and his equally helpless crew were just sober enough to be sensible. They looked at the lights on shore, which did not seem more than a mile distant, and they looked seaward at the long black bank of sand, with the battered hull of a wreck upon it scowling an evil omen upon them at scarcely more than a hundred yards, and then they looked over their stern at a diminutive boat which such vessels usually keep in tow for landing or taking up passengers, &c. It would not have carried half-a-dozen persons in the best of weather, and so they could hardly have looked at it with any view to the present occasion; but the vicar's eye gleamed upon them as brightly as the balls of phosphorus that lightened the now dark night. He was urged to go below and rest till morning, as nothing more could be done, but declined leaving the poor lady, who would not hear of leaving the deck, and a few cloaks were tossed to them with a despairing assurance of no danger.

The vicar did not like the manner of his parting friends, and when they descended to their berths, as they all did, had certainly no temptation to indulge his old habit of dozing; so he fixed himself and his almost insensible charge as steadily as he could and his eyes upon the fore-cabin, whilst the night continued much the same—blowing rather hard, but never reaching to a storm.

Some time after midnight he saw a head steal

through the now moonlighted deck, and after examining the unabated weather, turn to a long observation of himself. Presently another head appeared, and then another, and he felt convinced the panic-stricken miscreants meant to desert their passengers. To put it beyond doubt he thought the best plan was to show he was awake, and he rose up, without seeming to observe them, and looked about him. The heads directly vanished, and he saw it was full time to execute another design of his own. Before they could take a second look he had untied the tow-rope and set the little boat adrift on the tide which was now running fast in shore, and in less than a minute carried it bounding out of sight. He then lay quietly down again, and seemed to go to sleep.

After a while they again showed themselves, apparently more resolute, and staggered to the stern, where they burst into smothered curses to see their last hope gone. Perhaps it was well that it was gone, for they would probably have committed any atrocity to secure it. Not suspecting the old man of such a sharp ruse, they were obliged to content themselves with another visit to the brandy cask, and returned to take their chance in their own quarters.

Daylight discovered there had been no danger but the danger inseparable from fear and incapacity. The wind had been fair all the time, and precisely what a sailor would have wished, for it was quite direct as it could blow, and might have carried them to the end of their voyage before they now recom-

menced it. The captain and his crew slunk upon deck as soon as they had got well of the brandy cask, and having assured themselves of their perfect safety, became braver than sea lions. They had only anchored to oblige their terrified passengers, for they rather preferred a hurricane, and so they patched up their rigging, and enjoyed the joke immensely.

But their sufferers had no mind to let them off so cheaply. Their sickness had performed its own cure, and both the gentlemen and the lady—especially the latter, who was the more angry for her personal dilapidations—set up such a roulade of wrath as never was heard out of France, and maintained that but for their friend who gave no account of himself they must have been buried deeper than the plummet of the ‘Well Beloved’ ever sounded. It signified very little who he was or what he was; he had proved their *bon ange*, and they would publish to all the world that he had saved everyone of their lives as well as those of the poltroons to whom they had confided them. The altercation broke out again and again till they ran safely into Calais harbour, and there poor Mr. Bloomer found that notwithstanding all compliments and all triumphs at the near verification of his being the right man in the right place his troubles had yet to begin.



## CHAPTER X.

AS soon as Madame and her compatriots saw themselves secure from the evil consequences that might have ensued from provoking the crew and their commander beyond all limits, the squabble was continued much more seriously. The angry lady had not been so unobservant of what passed in the night but her recollections in the morning retained it very carefully; and when the officers of the *Douane* came on board for passports and their customary search, and the porters and commissionaires had come alongside to take luggage to the Custom House and recommend lodgings and their own services, out she broke and out broke her friends, who had decided in consultation on the same prudential reserve. The first fit of defiance was a refusal to pay their passage-money in tones which exceeded all established usage, for it is a rule in France always to dispute the reckoning. And next came the reasons under a vast number of heads, the chief of which were that it was the highest of iniquity to send the old "Well Beloved" to sea, and

much more to carry passengers who had lives to lose ;—that the planks were leaky and went where they pleased, the ropes rotten and not fit to support a spider, the captain a *miserable* who had never sailed before, and the rest only qualified like himself to cut their passengers' throats, from doing which they had only been prevented by that *brave homme* who had cut the tow-rope instead.

Madame's gratitude had carried her a step too far, and attention was now entirely diverted to poor Mr. Bloomer, whose object to get away as fast as he could seemed postponed very indefinitely.

So, then, the loss was not accidental, but a horrible design to prevent all chance of rescue, and save himself from a worse fate on shore. Everyone had seen from the first that he was some runaway from justice, and would give no account of himself because he believed all the world a great *gens d'armes* in pursuit of him. He would be demanded by the British Government. They must detain him in prison, or prepare for a declaration of war. He had conspired against the French navy, and must go before the Minister of Marine, and, above all, he had imposed upon honest traders and refused to pay his passage.

The unfortunate vicar could make no head against so many accusers all at once, and his confusion and stammering proved, of course, that he had nothing to say for himself. In vain he declared he would pay whatever they pleased,—double, triple, quadruple—and give the French navy half-a-dozen boats;

for the one that would have drowned them all. Nobody understood him till he began to feel his pockets, and then their comprehension improved. But there was nothing in the first, and when he tried the second there was nothing still; another and another were equally unproductive, till at last he remembered the clothes he had left in the ready-made shop, and the lump of money he had left in them, with the addition of his handsome gold watch, and everything by which he might easily have proved his respectability. Every failure produced its shout of laughter, and finally his rueful expression on finding himself in a foreign country without a farthing to pay his way, produced a peal of wrathful hilarity not very surprising in those who took it all for a wonderfully well acted piece of hypocrisy.

The noise soon brought a superior officer on board to learn what was the matter, and being a man in authority and full practice he was not long in obtaining a hearing. He addressed the Vicar with grave politeness.

"Bon jour, monsieur," he began.

"Bon jour, monsieur," replied the simple-hearted culprit; much too simple to understand that he appeared in that character, and greatly relieved to find himself accosted by any one in his senses.

"Monsieur is lately arrived from London?"

"Just this minute, monsieur."

"Has monsieur any friends in this country?"

"I am sorry to say, monsieur, I don't know yet : I am come to see."

"No friends! very incommode, monsieur."

"Very much so, for I find I have left all my money behind."

"*Facheu !* does monsieur know where he left it ?"

"In my other clothes, in the shop where I bought these."

"It is to be hoped that monsieur knows the address."

Monsieur never thought of asking the name of the street.

"But the name of the marchand ?"

"God bless me ! I just remember——"

"What does monsieur remember ?"

"That I forgot to enquire."

"And monsieur has left his money and his clothes he does not know where or with whom ! perhaps he was in haste ?"

"That is my only excuse ; I certainly was in great haste."

"I hope monsieur will continue as well contented with that excuse. He is fortunate in being able to make so light of his accident ! will he deign to say what is his profession ?"

"*Oui*, monsieur. I am a clergyman."

The mob could not hear this from so unclerical a figure without a loud laugh.

"Silence, *je vous prie*, *messieurs* ! Do clergymen in England wear that sort of dress ?"

"Not exactly, monsieur, but my friends did not wish to part with me, and it was the only mode of escaping them."

"*Plaisant!* I am not surprised they wished to keep monsieur. We shall hope to keep him in Calais and see that his passport is *en regle*."

"Pas——!" Mr. Bloomer began to perceive from a dry sort of smile that he might possibly have misunderstood this polite gentleman.—"Pa-ssport! I forgot it!"

"*Parbleu, c'etoit un malheur!* we must take the advice of Monsieur le Juge du Pays, and Monsieur le Juge is gone to Paris and will not return for a month."

Mr. Bloomer's agitation increased. What should he do! He had said he was in great haste—he could not be detained.

"Monsieur must be patient—his passport is not the only thing wanted. He forgets that he has no money and something considerable to pay, besides giving a more precise account of himself. We must invite monsieur to accompany us to the Bureau, where his business will be properly attended to."

A result so unforeseen and overwhelming to the best of all plans which the poor Vicar, bristling to the point of every gray hair, had thought too good to be invented by any one else, seemed to operate upon his whole nature with a power little less than galvanic, but it showed itself more in surprise than anger. The whole edifice he had built so cunningly had tumbled about his ears at the very moment when

he was raising his flag at the summit, and from causes too insignificant for notice.

The Assizes that must have lived in a memory so luminous would now be chronicled in the darkest page of history and resign their light to the locked-up treasures of the Juge du Pays. There was no alternative but submission, for though a very small exertion of unimpaired intellect might probably have found a remedy, the wherewithal was not at his command.

The lookers on understood every sign of good feeling as a sign of alarmed conscience and, though the fair sufferer whom he had cherished through the night of horrors protested, whatever he had done, he was the best of *les bons anges*, and her friends were unbounded in their hopes that the *bon ange* would get well out of it, with unlimited promises of supplying his prison house with their choicest stores, he was impatient to march off with his guards, and begged they would lose no time in taking him where they would.

Madame favoured him with the emphatic embrace so orthodox amongst our demonstrative neighbours, the gentlemen scraped him with their beards, and his official friends announced that they attended monsieur's pleasure—and so Mr. Bloomer achieved his burning wish by placing a foot upon French territory, though whether he was "the right man in the right place" remains to be questioned. It looked very like the reverse.

We must not go through the whole catalogue of

troubles to which our Vicar was fated through many hours, the various transfers from one deputy dog in office to another to find some Œdipus who could make him out; and his highly suspicious resistance of all questions as to name, friends, and business in France. As we are not writing his history exclusively we must confine ourselves to such parts of it as we find connected with main events—amongst these may be reckoned a charge from the Mercantile Company who enjoyed the ownership of the "*Bien Aimée*," supported by the captain, and his following in mortal haste to anticipate the charge against themselves. Being preferred by men of substance in that subordinate world it of course received attention greatly paramount to passports and empty pockets, and was listened to with shrugs and grimaces proportioned to a national outrage. Its particular service to our history is under two heads, the first being a fixed decision of what was to be done with him, and the second a security against being transported back to the custody of Mr. Badger, who had advertised a great reward for him in all the newspapers which arrived from England the next morning. The decision is anticipated as a commitment to prison, and there he at last obtained some gleam of better fortune in sympathy for his age and infirmities. He was placed in separate confinement, with which, under the circumstances, he would have been well enough content, if he had known how to get out of it, and allowed leisure to recover and revolve his

next proceeding. It was a dreary study, for there was nothing but his brain to revolve, and he awaited in blank suspense whatever fortune might further choose to do with him ; starving, but not sensible of it, and motionless as if he had been frozen. His first attention to any exterior object was to a bit of looking-glass over his empty grate, for there he was surprised to see a rough-looking burley man in a blue woollen coat and brown felt hat staring wildly at him and motionless as himself—who could he be, and what could he want there ? If the worn out prisoner had cared what happened to him he would have felt some fear. But the delusion was soon over. It was the same old skipper he had seen in the glass by the Tower Stairs, but he was sadly changed, and all his keenness was gone. Nevertheless, the sight did him a service, for it showed him the small likelihood of his lasting to protect the unhappy Lucy or ever seeing her again unless he took some care to preserve himself. But where were the means ? oh, for that decent black suit which the rogue of the “ready made” had so carefully locked up ! oh, for the pockets in which he might have packed all his misery if he only had them with the bait he had left there.

He turned to look again with some minuteness, for he was purblind and had left his glasses with his black waistcoat, and now he encountered another surprise. He saw the door behind him open and close after admitting an elegantly dressed lady all ribbons and ringlets, and as comely as



kindly intentions always ought to be, bearing a tray well furnished with delicacies and a stately flask.

"*Ah, mon bon ange,*" she cried, "you see I have not lost you. I have had an eye kept on you all day, for I do not forget last night, and here is the best dinner I can get for you till I know what you like better. Sit down, *mon cher,*" and she busied herself in disposing her supplies in the most tempting manner. "Sit down, for you must be dying for want of support, and I will talk to you whilst you dine, and consider with you afterwards how to get out of this doleful place—for none of us believe you have done anything to bring you here, and if you have it is no business of ours."

The Vicar could hardly recognise her under such vast improvement, and still less express his satisfaction at seeing her.

"Ah, Monsieur," she interrupted, "you would make me laugh if I were not more ready to cry. I serve my own feelings much more than I serve you, and all the thanks I will have are to see you sit down. You want friends," she continued, without allowing him to speak; "and though I have observed that you are not accustomed to take them from the bourgeoisie, there are times when any friends are better than none; know me at once as Madam Ambrosine, who keeps a café in this town, and our two *compagnons de voyage* as a worthy restaurateur and the honest master of a wine store in one of our back streets. Our season is rather slack just

now and we took advantage of a cheap conveyance to pay a few days' visit to Grande Bretagne; and that's our history. If you want to know more, our excellent restaurateur sends you that fricandeau, and the other sends you the flask of chablis, and I myself am the fairy that has conjured up the *vol au vent* and the *soufflé*. Now you know it all, and if you won't eat I shall go away."

Mr. Bloomer, besides his great necessity, knew the best breeding was to obey her injunctions, and notwithstanding his cares and futile attempts to make himself understood at the pace of a Frenchwoman, contrived to turn several minutes to apparent account. When he found it time to resist all further pressing, Madame put the tray aside for his supper, and told him to expect her again when he ought to breakfast, and then they sat *tête-à-tête* to discuss other business, preparatory to which she took a glance at the door and produced paper and pen, and ink.

"Prisoners are not allowed to write," she said, "but my café makes me a good many friends, and nobody cares to quarrel with me. You will not be interrupted whilst I am here; write to England and tell them what has happened, and I will send the letter as soon as I leave you."

"*Mais—but—je ne desire pas*. I do not wish *à-à-qu'ils savoir*—tha-tha—that is to say *ou je suis*—whe-where I am."

"But Monsieur told me that he was married, and surely a wife may be trusted to send money and

protection, or rather to bring them herself; and what wife would betray a husband? Send for her, *mon cher*, and she will be here to-morrow night."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated the Vicar, remembering that his French was not so good as Madame's English. "Madame sets me a good example of candour, and encourages me to confide a fact which puts my wife out of the question. The primary cause of all my misfortunes is this lady, who might possibly have made an excellent partner for anybody who could manage her, but was just about to be provided for by separate maintenance when I took my passage in the '*Bien Aimée*.'"

"Ah, *ma foi*, then I am sure the blame is all her own, for whatever offence Monsieur may have committed against the law, I can see in his face that he is *aimable à merveille*!"

"Pardon me, Madame; I have not committed any offence against the law, and am come here to ensure its connection with justice. Discomfort at home is sure to drive people elsewhere for consolation, and in my own case the relief was sought in habits of intemperance. Wicked people took advantage of a long course of imbecility to wrong the memory of my dearest friend, and the happiness of a beloved adopted daughter, and I have set out in a fit of frenzy, because I think I shall here find the means of defeating their iniquities."

"Mon Dieu, I was sure you were *un excellent homme*, but if Madame *votre épouse* is unworthy,

there must be many others to befriend you. Think, *mon cher*, for we poor *bourgeoisie* who depend upon others, are nobodies, and your accusers are men of influence and implacable against your nation, because it outrivals their shipping trade. Money and importance does everything here as it does in most other places, and though I do not know that those that dispense justice go far enough to take pay for their judgments, there is too much deference to those who are able to give it. The Juge du Pays may come home again at any time, and, *Oh mon Dieu*, only imagine yourself disguised again, like a convict with a great chain round your leg!" and she hid the cruel picture from her eyes with a fountain of tears.

Mr. Bloomer's pulse was a little quickened. He had no answer to make but a rueful admission that there was not a soul to apply to, for though he had most devoted friends they were one and all decided that he was crazy and would force him back to their custody.

"Ah the *malheur*! but keep up your spirits, *mon bon ange*. My business obliges me to make good use of all my wits, and I have a happy thought at the service of most people. *Dieu merci*! I have one for you which will make Madame *votre epouse* whatever you desire. You mentioned a separate maintenance, and she seems to have had her own way long enough. You must write directly and tell her the amount will be regulated by what she does to deserve it. If she does nothing she will

have nothing. Maintain yourself *en homme*, for those who are self-willed are only ruled by a will that is stronger, and you will be amazed to see how suddenly some women are improved by a change of government."

She smoothed her sheet of paper on the table and placed the pen in his hand; but the Vicar stared in affright and was more incapable than ever. Maintain himself *en homme* in the face of Mrs. Bloomer! he had never ventured on such a thing in his life!

"Then it is time you did, *mon cher*. Do you not tell me the happiness of all you love is at stake, and would you sacrifice them to the terrors of one whom you have no reason to love at all? And if you have not courage for a style which you have never practised I will tell you what to say."

The Vicar was very much disinclined and very much ashamed to appear so, for it was no doubt his duty to act as Madame advised him. He began a good many replies with a tremulous repetition of buts, and Madame looked impatiently for what was to follow them, but as nothing came she bethought her of arguments more cogent than the galleys.

"Monsieur has a beloved adopted daughter who *sans doute* returns his affection?"

"Oui, Madame! a most devoted child who has given every hour of her life to amends for the calamities I drew down upon my head by this unhappy marriage. Beautiful in person, seraphic in her feelings, and only just arrived at the age of twenty. Such is the being who has been under-

valued and neglected, and otherwise unkindly treated from her infancy, which has chiefly determined me to emancipate us both from society so uncongenial."

"And this treasure so good and so amiable, Monsieur has left to lament his absence and to doubt what has become of him; to imagine that he is perhaps dead, and she herself dependent solely on one who has ill-used her from childhood? Has Monsieur ever thought of what may be the consequence of such grief and such a prospect? Is he sure that it will not break such a heart. Is he sure that it has not broken already?"

The Vicar's eagerness to compass his great discoveries had left him no reflection on the cost thus suggested, and Madame felt almost alarmed at the emotion she caused. It was the more touching from every attempt he made to explain his reluctance, for it soon became clear that he was not actuated by the imbecile subordination in which husbands have occasionally been kept by their domineering helpmates, but by that feeling though feeble disinclination to give pain to any living creature, which had so sadly encouraged evil propensities whenever he might have restrained them.

"I see, *mon cher*," said his kind-hearted observer, "what you really are; there is no misunderstanding you, and instead of the terrible malefactor who has set the world on fire, you are too worthy of a better to live in it. Such people are too rare to be tortured into natures which are foreign to them, and I will

not have to reproach myself with any further attempt. I must see what can be done by means less distressing, and suspect I may even make some improvement on the plan so distasteful."

"Any other plan would be a mercy to me if it only gives me a day for the object that brings me and liberty to hasten back for the consolation or the triumph of my anxious child. I am a poor old broken-down man, and a very short time in this place would make all plans useless, but how I am to get out of it is as little to be dreamed as were the chances that got me in."

"You must not overpower yourself by thinking about it. My friends and I are not persons in high places, but we have a good will, which is sometimes better, and I hope I see my way to set you free with less delay than we should find in friends from home. The people here are engaged to treat our *bon ange* as well as they dare, and to-morrow I will bring tidings which I hope will make him happy. It is now time to take my leave; for some of those who were so forward to make the most of their authority pass their evening at our café, where they are much better people, and I have something to say to them. Adieu till you have had a good sleep, and look for me in the morning!"

In a few minutes after this, Madame Ambrosine was presiding over the sparkling attractions of her café, exchanging pleasantries with her numerous habitués, and as little occupied with graver matters as if she had none upon her mind. Perhaps it is a

tact more peculiar in French women than to any others and subjects them to a very mistaken appreciation in this country in which the superficial observation of a great many of us sets them down as mere frivolous lovers of pleasure. We believe the truth is that their inexhaustible vivacity gives to every occupation of their lives the character of a leading trait, and that very few of us are aware of the many cares through which it sustains them. Their minds are never asleep so long as they can keep their eyes open, and they live longer in half a life than the women of most other countries in a whole one. We do not speak of the high or the low, but of that class which give a nation its nationality, and there we find our light, considerate and compassionate Madame Ambrosine far more a creature of rule than exception.

She had seldom leisure to bestow more than a passing word or two upon any one supporter, though her popularity with all was not to be doubted, but she detained the friends of her voyage rather longer than the rest with a look of confidence which, as she passed them on, assumed a smile quite sweet enough to prove that her still attractive face must once have been beautiful. The mighty man of the customs, who had captured the redoubted Englishman, was one of her next admirers, for though she had expressed her opinion of him in no flattering terms on that occasion, he was not now on duty, and therefore not the same person. Something she said, when no one happened to be near,



which caused them to put their heads close together and part with a glance of intelligence, and then three or four others, who had made themselves conspicuous in disposing of the Vicar, took their turn for a cup of coffee or a glass of lemonade and went off, distinguished by rather more attention than Madame usually accorded them. But every one who made his way to her throne, retired, fully possessed with the conviction that no one else was so highly favoured, and no one had cause to be jealous. And so everything went charmingly, and at length the doors closed and Madame sought her handkerchief to wipe away a tear, for which none but herself could have seen a reason.

## CHAPTER XI.

**F**AR different was the lonely lodgement of the Vicar through many hours of that despairing night, for he sat immovable and almost unconscious of what had happened to him, his senses flitting from a pale and patient angel, forcing a smile of forbearance on his folly and its fatal remedy, and protecting a sick bed from the reproaches of memory which had come too late. Flitting from this vision of self-sacrifice to another which vibrated through his helpless frame with more intensity, his eyes were glazed upon a simple tomb in his rude church yard newly embellished with a second sinless name, which changed the lament of too late to a shudder of too early. Other fragments of thought cut through his miserable old brain with neglected duties, evil examples, degraded name, hopeless future, and a tormenting fury, aping youth and beauty in the last new fashion and pursuing him for ever and ever with a diabolical quacking of Aylesbury ducks. Nothing that passed outwardly

could distract him from the motley confusion within, though lights were brought in and a bright fire kindled, and busy hands moved stealthily to make his bed. He would have shaken in his waking nightmare throughout the night if some kind hand had not taken him by the arm and laid him gently on a comfortable pillow, and a watchful eye regarded him till his visions died away and existence itself seemed to pass with them.

Whose was the cloaked figure that had stolen through the darkness to perform these Samaritan duties and continued wiping its eyes that a seemingly expiring effort to redeem the past should be so cruelly rewarded? Whose were the lips that had come breathless to cheer his last hours of confinement with far different thoughts for to-morrow and found all his faculties lost in delirium? How prone we are to call this world a bad one when, perhaps, we have never gone the right way to prove its goodness. Hard, because we have made no valid claim to its pity. Selfish, because we have had no need of its charity!

In the total prostration of the Vicar there was at least one advantage, for it made him sleep the sleep of a dead man far into the next morning, and when he opened his eyes to wonder where he was, there was the cloaked figure again intently watching the effects it had produced.

"*Bon jour, mon brave,*" said the cheerful voice of Madame. "How have you passed the night? are you able to take a journey to-day?"

"A j—j—journey! To the world's end! what journey does Madame mean?"

"Wherever you wish to go. Your doors are open, and you have only to get up and breakfast whilst I go for your passport, and then we will set off together."

"Set off! To—together."

"Certainly; do you think I would let you go by yourself! Only tell me to what place it is to be *visé*, and as you will most likely have a great deal of talking you will want an interpreter, and somebody to see you take care of yourself."

"For Boulogne—*visé* for Boulogne; but how has all this been done?"

"Never mind. Favour is cheap when we buy of subordinates who have no chance of a better market. They could gain nothing by sending you to the galleys, and something better by sending you about your business, *mon brave*; and so my friends and I made a small contribution to buy them a better conscience, and help you through what you have to do in France, and then back where that *enfant chérie* is so *desolée*. Adieu for a few minutes. Here is a better suit of clothes which my late husband never wore, and linen to last you home, and you shall have a new pair of glasses as we leave the town. You have nothing to think about, and I cannot stop for questions—so *au revoir*, *mon bon ange*, and eat your breakfast."

She was gone whilst she spoke, and the Vicar jumped up to assure himself that all this was real.

His long sleep had done its good work, and his waking news had roused him to a new world; with such a beginning, Fate meant him to accomplish all he had undertaken, and by the time madame returned, the wild-looking old skipper—who must have borne a strong resemblance to the “ancient mariner”—was a respectable gentleman once more in black, and fortifying himself for a day of uncommon labours.

Taking upon her now the full charge of him as nurse and protector of a stray child, she felt she must know something more specific about him before she could render the further service he was sure to require, and Mr. Bloomer could have had no reservation from her, even if the time had not past for all apprehension of discovery. In a very short time he would learn, or despair of learning, all he looked for at Boulogne, and before the day should be over he hoped to be on his way back to Goldsworthy.

As soon, therefore, as their railway carriage without fellow-travellers, conveyed them beyond his scene of disaster, they were deep in a story, which, broken as it was by imperfect language and every infirmity of memory and feeling, madame declared to be the most affecting and the most *étonnante* she had ever listened to. The recital shortened the journey for both parties, for it did not end till they stopped at the last station before its conclusion.

Here they took in an elderly and pleasant-looking fellow-traveller, from whom madame immediately thought she might pick up information to their purpose, for she found by a word or two exchanged with the porter who let him in, that he resided at Boulogne, and heard him called *Monsieur le Docteur*. The very person to know everybody there, and those from England in particular, for the fine ear of a Frenchwoman in such matters very soon detected him for an Englishman himself.

"*Monsieur*," she observed, when they were again on their way, "has resided some time in this country?"

"True, madam," he replied, with a good-natured smile; "but not long enough, I perceive, to pass for your countryman, which I wish I could."

Madame bowed to the compliment, but protested that monsieur had mistaken her. She knew him for English from his uncalled for liberality to the man who let him into the carriage, and for a resident of some duration from the perfection of his accent.

And then Monsieur bowed, and said he was very much flattered; and the conversation was continued with mutual pleasure, for Frenchwomen of all grades above the lowest are undistinguishable by manner, and could not be commonplace if they would. The Vicar paid no attention, for to strangers on their first immigration across the Channel, however well they may have been in-

structed at home, a French conversation of any length seems nothing but one interminable word, with as little meaning as the roll of wheels.

He was moreover much overcome by the tale he had just told, and breathless with expectation of the adventures he was about to encounter. The first distinct word that seized his apprehension, was the name of Mr. Seymour, madame having, in devotion to her new interest, darted into the first opening for the subject so important to her *bon ange*.

"I have heard," said Monsieur le Docteur, "that a gentleman of the name formerly did duty at the English chapel at Boulogne, but he left it some years before I took up my residence. Perhaps as I have friends there of much longer standing than myself, I may be able to obtain from them any information which madame desires."

"Wha—wha—what does monsieur say?" burst in the roused Vicar, with an eagerness which much disposed Monsieur le Docteur to feel his pulse. "Monsieur Seymour is my oldest friend! I have ran away from all the rest and the greatest concerns of my life to find him! I have been advertised like a malefactor in the *Times* newspaper." For he had procured it at the Calais station. "I have been lost and murdered—at least very nearly so—at sea. I have been put in prison on shore: I have had a narrow escape from the galleys, and now I will give the gray head from my shoulders to know where he is."

Monsieur le Docteur looked significantly at madame.

"No, monsieur," said madame, fervently. "*Mon brave* is not an object for a *maison de santé*, though he has enough to make him so. He is an ecclesiastique of your own country, and believes Monsieur Seymour can assist him to unravel a great mystery relating to a Beau Frere who disappeared many years ago, under very strange circumstances."

"In that case," said the doctor, "I will do everything in my power to learn where Mr. Seymour may be found, and begin my enquiries as soon as we arrive. It occurs to me that there is something mysterious in our own churchyard, where I have often wondered what could be the meaning of a mound, with only a nameless stone at the head, surrounded by an iron railing. The clerk and the sexton, as well as the clergyman who at present officiates, and is one of three or four who have succeeded Mr. Seymour, know nothing about it but what they have heard from their immediate predecessors; and the story goes that many years ago, as you say, some unknown gentleman who never suffered his name to transpire, died at Boulogne, where his friends requested that no memorial should be raised till certain circumstances permitted them to cover his grave with a suitable monument."

"My brother-in-law! His name is on the coffin!"

"I should think not, since there is none upon the



head-stone. Allow me to ask, sir, how long is it since he disappeared."

"Twelve years," articulated the Vicar. "I have reason to remember the date, for it caused the death of my sister, and my own distracted head to think first of another mother for her orphan child!"

"The date, I believe, corresponds very nearly with the construction of those iron railings. My advice is that you go to the clerk, whom the people of the hotel where you put up will easily find for you, and obtain a sight of the register of burials, where the name of the friend you seek will appear, if it appears anywhere. Do this at once, and as soon as I have made my round of enquiries I will meet you where the deserted stranger lies forgotten."

The train was stopping at the instant, and the doctor, who felt much interest, took a hasty leave to perform his promise. Madame pronounced him another *bon ange*, and the Vicar at last placed a tottering foot upon his land of promise.

The clerk, who was of course an Englishman, from the office he filled, was shortly introduced to them, and proved obliging and intelligent, for having thought that nobody could want him for any purpose but to see the edifice in his charge, he had brought the key with him, and made no difficulty in acceding to an examination of the register; accordingly Mr. Bloomer, with one trembling hand upon his stick, and the other on the careful arm of

madame, stepped impatiently after their guide, who was not long in conducting them to the vestry. The great folio was produced; and the Vicar was too much agitated to put on his new spectacles, which madame did for him.

“Don’t flurry yourself, *mon brave*,” she said, in the touching tones she would have used to a child in a fever, “and don’t begin at the first page, for you could not devour them all without dying before you got to the right one. Think of the date you want, and Monsieur will turn to it at once.”

“T—t—twelve years ago,—twelve years ago.”

The clerk turned to his index and then to the place and frowned with surprise and discomposure. It was very singular, the important leaf was missing. He turned back and then forward, and then turned up the book to ascertain if anything loose had been restored to a wrong page. Nothing dropped out, and then he returned to the vacancy, where he frowned again. Closer investigation showed the neat operation of a penknife, and there was not a doubt that the page had been stolen. How could it be? Who could have done it? He was in consternation. He had never trusted the book out of his possession, and never shown it without a strict supervision. The Vicar looked stupefied, and the French lady more piercing.

“Never out of your supervision, Monsieur? In that case you must have cut the leaf out yourself, which nobody believes. Think; there must have been some one instance in which you went away or

went to sleep. This is an affair of immense consequence, and your memory may be recalled *affreusement*. Do many strangers examine this book ?”

“Not one in a twelvemonth, madame, and, now I think of it, only one since I have been here.”

“Ha ! And do you know who it was ?”

“No, madame. He was a gentleman from England.”

“How long ago ?”

“A long while. It might have been four years, and it might be three or four more, I cannot say,” and the poor man seemed really frightened out of his recollections by that piercing eye, for Madame with the sensitive heart had her full share of the fiery spirit of her nation.

“You cannot tell us when, but you can tell us what sort of a person he was, old or young, tall or short, dark or fair, what he said, and how he was dressed ? If Monsieur cannot answer here he will be questioned in another place.”

“He was not young and not old ; dark, I remember, not so tall as I am, but thicker set.”

“His dress ?”

“Very different from other travellers, and more like an English farmer. All fustian, or something like it, and worn rather slovenly.”

“His conversation ?”

“I only recollect he told me not to say that a gentleman of his description had been here, as he wanted to get back by the Dover boat, and I

might oblige him to call upon a great many friends."

Madame turned her eye upon the Vicar to see if he comprehended, and had ever known such a person, when all his energies united in a sudden burst of enlightenment.

"Cheek! Cheek, the villain I have been sure of! Cheek,—the only man who could wish to destroy the evidence of Sir Harry's death! Cheek, who forged the lying pretext for denying a monument or a name to his grave! Cheek, who has destroyed all he ever looked upon in this world, and shall now look upon nothing but the retribution of another!"

The clerk, perceiving that his position became critical, bespoke indulgence by remembering the gentleman he mentioned had, he verily believed, delayed for hours over the register that he might tire him out and send him to sleep. Whether he had succeeded or not he could not say, but he feared it was possible that he might have just nodded a moment, because he wakened him before he left to give his last injunctions.

Mr. Bloomer's conviction being thus complete, the next trial that awaited him was a visit to the nameless headstone, at which he was to pay the tribute of his grief to the dear friend of his youth—the husband of his sister and the father of his beloved Lucy, and he had scarcely power to reach the small enclosure. He could not speak, and made no attempt for some time, but continued looking down as if his

eyes would have penetrated the earth, and his considerate friend of a day, who might truly have applied her term of a good angel to herself, motioned their guide to stand apart and not disturb him. At length he turned slowly towards her and spoke a few subdued and broken words.

"I have found him! It is he! I know it from a kindred feeling which springs from this sod. He was my younger and should have gone after; he had no fault, but too much goodness, and for this they did worse than murder him, for they charged his memory with the murder of another. I have but one thing to do before I die, and Heaven will not desert after helping me so far. There is judgment on the trace of his maligner. When? not to-morrow—no—the day after—the day after—my place is in England." He drew a deep breath, and then continued, "whatever tidings that stranger brings us, I must leave you to-night, but you shall hear of me ere long, and perhaps you will not have seen me for the last time; but it is best to lose none in praying God to bless you!"

All this was said without seeking to make it better understood by foreign assistance, and so free from agitated stammer that Madame could follow it distinctly. Perhaps the reason was that assured sorrow is calmer than its apprehension. She did not attempt to answer him, for there was no argument to use against such a resolution, though it was a struggle to maintain silence under the certainty that an old man in whom she had taken so

much interest, though only for a few hours, could never live to effect the good for which he had endured so much. She felt conscious that she looked upon him for the last time and returned his blessing far less firmly than he had given it, and now their late travelling companion returned with the result of his inquiries.

"I am sorry," he said, "to tell you that Mr. Seymour died many years ago, but he left a widow who is still living, and residing in the country within a league of us. As I know your impatience, I have brought my own carriage and will be your conductor."

The comparative repose we have noted again gave place to the restless flush and palpitantion which had before seemed lighting and hastening Mr. Bloomer's downward progress, and the doctor regarded his condition very seriously.

"I expected," he said, "that this approaching close of great perturbations would increase their violence and have therefore been the more anxious to get them over, but it is a time to be candid, and tell you that you must assist me manfully, for you can do more for yourself than I can do for you. Your appearance shows me that you have suffered much of late from illness which was properly the doctor's province, but that is well over; a worse remains which requires a more combined effort. If our visit to day is fortunate I have no fear for you, you will right yourself like the tottering tree when the tempest is over; if otherwise, you must endure

like a good and Christian man which your exertions prove you to be, and resign yourself to the thought that Providence has rendered them abortive for some good purpose of its own, and that you have an equal duty to preserve yourself for the consolation of griefs which you cannot remove. In the latter case, with time and rest, I have no despair of our remedies, but I am bound to say on no other condition."

"T—T—Time and rest," replied the Vicar, as disordered as ever, "are not for me; a day at home is of—of more value to me than an age of doubtful absence, and happen—happen what may, I return to-night. If there is no—no better conveyance, the frailest fishing boat, storms, quicksands, desertion to my fate, no matter what. To-night if I live; to-morrow would be too late."

The doctor and Madame exchanged looks of more than doubt, and signs that persuasion must defeat its own end.

"Come then, *mon brave*," said the latter, mournfully, "you shall not be *contrarié*. Bear up at least till we see Madame Seymour, and then we will help you in anything you please."

"Madame is right," the desponding doctor admitted, "there is no time to lose. Let us lead you to the carriage, and trust that Mrs. Seymour may perform some wonder which we cannot divine."

Having followed the Vicar so far in pursuit of a hope which had been vague and extravagant in all eyes but his own, and perhaps might still have been

thought nothing more than the conjuration of a brain that would bear no contradiction, we should feel a melancholy concern in following him still and seeing how far sinister auguries are fulfilled, but other interests compel us to be content with having accounted for his strange disappearance when perhaps we may be very near the conclusion of his history. At all events we leave him in good hands, and with no doubt of hearing further particulars, which we hope may be better than we expect.



## CHAPTER XII.

FROM this desponding without the walls of Lymp-ton we turn to the state of hope within them, and to Messrs. Cox and Cheek. To the last first, because he was, in some sort, the gentleman of the house; having in his days of judicial eminence, taken his turn on the rota as visiting magistrate. He was a great man then, and the turnkeys and the culprits bowed and shivered before him; but great men, like the great individual who once made a flight through chaos, sometimes diminish as they rise, and Mr. Cheek had risen high enough to become a very small one when he soared into the domains of Mr. Bolt; the gentleman whom we left, a short time ago, handcuffed to the bars of a dungeon.

His arrival had been very late in the night, or rather in the first hours of the morning—the most cheerless to the worn traveller; and worn enough was Mr. Cheek. Bravado had stood its ground manfully, but the last ten miles had done its business; a grim procession through narrow stone passages, with a dying lamp at intervals to show

how dark they were, had nothing reviving in it, neither had the chill small resting-place, with its grated window and truckle bed, in which his long-projected day of triumph concluded. As he dropped into his hard wooden chair, he seemed not to know where he was, till he recognized the leader of his escort, who remained when the rest were gone, to hope he had the honour of seeing his worship pretty well.

Mr. Cheek was not very conscious of how he returned the compliment, but Mr. Bolt was encouraged by his condescension to be talkative, and expressed his great pride in having charge of so distinguished a criminal; for criminal and prisoner were, in Mr. Bolt's acceptance, synonymous terms. He was happy to think that his worship would be better satisfied with the prison discipline than he used to be, for his representations had all been attended to, and all those indulgences he had disapproved of were quite done away with. Prisoners were now treated as they deserved to be, and taught to know that prison was not so pleasant a place as they used to find it before his worship took them in hand. "We don't allow our big coves now-a-days to live like fighting cocks, but keeps 'em in healthy condition, as the doctor says, and improves their minds with short commons and long hexortations, parson ditto. And then, that judge as your worship used to call a old woman, a cause he let everybody off, is gone dead, and we have Judge Raven now, as hangs 'em up like strings of onions. Good night, or morning,

sir, whichever you like best: you'll be quite delighted with your improvements."

His worship did not relish solitude, though he was scarcely up to company, and detained his comforter with something more to say, though he did not exactly know what it was. He was very much gratified, very, to have done so much good. He had tried hard to have Mr. Bolt promoted to a higher grade and better salary, and hoped he had succeeded in that also.

"Oh, yes, sir, thank'e kindly. I'm head man now, and pretty well off; but they never told me it was you as made me so. Anything I can do, sir, except let you go. Would you like to have a Psalm-book to amuse you, sir? Or the last Newgate Calendar, or a few last dying speeches?"

"Except let me go—of course," replied Mr. Cheek, with a twinkle, and somewhat in the tone of a question—"You are a capital officer, Bolt; and I dare say a thousand pounds—or two—would have no influence whatever over you?"

"Oh, none, sir, not a haporth! Don't you be afeared of my honesty; for, since that last escape, there's been double watch, and we all takes care of one another's conscience."

"Of course, Bolt, of course. I'm sure of it. And yet—three thousand pounds is a great deal of money!"

"A lot, your worship, to anybody as wouldn't be transported for taking it. But then, you see, there'd

be three thousand certainties of getting blowed and honest men can't afford that."

"No, Bolt; but clever ones never are."

"And yet, you see, sir, your worship is; and so's Cappen Cox! Hope you'll sleep well, sir. Chapel at seven o'clock; then breakfast, according to your own regiment; then a walk in the Quadrangle; then private hexortation. But it's all soon learnt, specially by them who knows it afore, as your worship does. Wish you a pleasant night, sir. Only hear how slick the locks and bolts turns, since your worship had 'em altered!"

We are afraid the night was not very pleasant, for Mr. Cheek sat as he was till daylight. His affairs were too pressing to waste the time in sleep; and yet, the more he considered them the less he knew what to do. He was a bear that had fallen into a pit, too steep to be got out of, except by the help of a rope. What he had heard before the magistrates convinced him of it. Aaron, whom he believed to have escaped, would no doubt be taken, and turn king's evidence; Bunckle was promised; Mother Bloomer was sure; Crowley was the most popular man in the country, and would have all the Goldsworthy interest to back him; whilst there was no lawyer rogue enough to undertake the defence but Moses Pinhorn. To Moses, therefore, he must write, which he did, the next day; but the letter did not reach him till after he had been bound to appear for the prosecution. He wrote to say he

would do what he could, but felt the case to be very dangerous.

This being a correct foretaste of several days following we need not continue the relation of Mr. Cheek's life in retirement, of which the only incidents were the visits of Mr. Bolt, who never failed to offer such comfort as he thought conducive to resignation.

Captain Cox, who (thanks to Aaron), had all this time enjoyed a comfortable quarter in the hospital, was not delivered over to Mr. Bolt till the day before the trials, when he was established next door to Mr. Cheek, and received the same attention.

"Hope I see you well, sir," said Mr. Bolt, in his afternoon call. "You'll be glad to hear we have got more company since you went to the 'firmary—a gentleman as says he's a friend of yourn."

"Who? Which of 'em?" cried the ghost of the once pulpy captain; "I've plenty that ought to be here."

"Aye, sir, so has most of us. But this is one you wouldn't ha' thought of—one as was a great martin cat about our discipline a while ago, though he don't much like it now, and they do say he'll go to the drop. By Dad, it's enough to make one laugh."

"Who, you grinning thief? Tell us who?"

"Well, sir, your next door neighbour is his worship, Christopher Cheek, Esquire."

"Cheek? What, Cheek? Impossible!"

"True for all that, sir, though you'd hardly know

him if you was to see him, for he don't look half such a great man as he used to."

"Cheek! By Jove, here's good news at last! What's he in for?"

"Oh, nothing low, sir; he's a great gentleman still, in a sort of way. He's in for murder."

"Murder! That's something like; who has he murdered?"

"Mr. Crowley, the new justice what committed you."

"He? No, sure? Say it again! It can't be! Crowley?"

"As sure as you are Cappen Cox."

"By the Lord, this is glorious! Here, I've a sovereign still; let us drink a good swing to him in a bottle of aquafortis!"

"Aye, but him as he murdered ain't dead yet, though it's all the same for Squire Cheek; for that new law for cheating Mr. Ketch out of so many fees ain't passed, and crimes is crimes the same as they used to be. You're to be tried to-morrow, they say, and then, you know, you've a right to another day, and as Sunday goes for nothing, you've got all the while till Monday morning."

The sudden sparkle of the Captain at his proposed carousal was as suddenly extinguished, and Mr. Bolt was obliged to continue his consolations.

"Don't you be downhearted, sir, for I was going to wish you joy. The nearer your trial the nearer your deliverance, one way or t'other, according to chances; and as you have lived so long upon chances,

that's good news, anyhow. But if I was you I wouldn't lay any long odds this time, acause there's a terrible chaffing about 'em in the town, where every spare bed is to hold half a dozen, and there aint standing room in the street for so much as nothing at all. Hundreds of gents from some place they calls the Corner are glad to get a mount upon the lamp-posts, and there they are betting two to one agin you; I never heered such a row. Lincoln, they say, the best jockey going, is to ride Prosecution; and Heaviside, what rides Defence, is heavy enough to break his back. Good arternoon, sir; we begins at nine o'clock to-morrow. Oh, I forgot,—there's a little gent with an order from the governor, who says he's your lawyer."

"Moses Pinhorn?"

"That's he."

"Curse you! Why couldn't you say so at first? Show him in and show yourself out, bloodhound!"

"That's your sort, sir; keep your spirits up. I'll send him in, and do the friendly next door."

He turned the key behind him with an imitative click of his tongue, and the Captain sank shivering upon his scanty iron bedstead, which, as far as it was bare, looked very like a gridiron. There he sat, with his head between his knees and his fingers thrust through his tangled hair, not unsuggestive of a nest of vipers coiling out of a brain too hot to hold them. Tossing on a tide without a shore,—borne sinking or swimming, he knew not which or

whither, till Moses was thrust in to perform the office of that celebrated mouse that gnawed the net of the lion.

The advent of this intimate friend was rather late, considering the crying occasion for him; but, having been duly apprised of all the particulars, he had seen no need for haste and only one mode of defence, which might be more convenient to himself at the last moment. Having received a welcome not remarkable for its flattery with the well-seasoned patience that had seldom been rewarded by anything better, except his profits, he expressed his concern for his good friend, and looked as hopeless as he could.

"Moses," cried the half dead scarecrow, "here's the last day almost over. Unroll yourself, and let us see the jewel in the toad's head. What can you do?"

"Truly," said Moses, "I have never seen a prospect so discouraging since Jonas was swallowed by the whale?"

"Come out of your synagogue! Your whale has swallowed me more than three days, and I want your miracle!"

"Miracles do not come as they came of old; their ways must be paved with shekels."

"To hell with your shekels, and let us understand you. I wrote you what I offered to Goldfield, and what his answer was. Now come to the point at once, for I don't mean to wait!"



The fever of his fears was catching. Moses could come to no point but a quick point for the door, which was safely locked again.

"Stop, Jew! I'm not mad, but not far from it. Hark, you! It is time we understood each other. You have had me at your mercy for many years, and small mercy would it have been if you could have carried out your plans without me. Have you not hinted a thousand times that I was a mere man of straw, and that time, without some miracle, must make me nothing at all? Have you not said that miracles were dear, and only to be bought by half a man's substance? And what else do you mean by your shekels? You see, I understand you. Do me this miracle and name your price!"

"Now, heaven be praised! I was frightened for your reason; but you are pacified, and we may talk pleasant. You are to be tried to-morrow upon two different counts, either of which would send you to the Antipodes, and both together, a few cubits farther. You have only yourself to consult whether it is best to escape them and live with half your substance, or lose all by this legal condemnation."

"Can you prevent it?"

"Not by your law, and only at great risk for defeating it, which I will do on conditions. If I fail, they will be of no consequence to you, for you will be in a world much better than this; if I succeed you can afford them. I have prepared a bond which only requires your signature. The deed to which it

relates, and which is fatal to your heirship at law will now be cancelled, and we will fairly destroy it in the presence of each other. I have brought it down for that purpose."

"Get me pen and ink!"

"I have them here. I might have made better terms, but I have no heart to take advantage of a friend's distress. That paper gives me no more than half of what I may secure to you."

Moses heaved a sigh, and the Captain dashed off his name.

"And now, Moses, what are you going to do?"

"I am going to Goldsworthy."

"To Goldsworthy! I tell you I have tried that already!"

"But not the right person. I have some knowledge of the state of that house from a damsel in my own, who has a sister staying there—or one that she calls so."

"Heaven help you, if she is the one I saw!"

"Whatever she may be, she will furnish pretexts for a visit, and she is the bosom friend of her who charges you on both these counts—the daughter of Sir Harry Longland."

"And then; what will you make of that?"

"The maid, Longland, is under heavy obligations to the mother of the Goldfield, who is in great trouble for her son, whose bills you are willing to restore. The Longland lady may save them from ruin by not appearing against you. Do you understand me now?"

The Captain's benighted eyes burst into brilliant illumination! The dark horse was the first favourite! The drowning man betted two to one upon the straw, and Moses set off upon his mission.

Alack! there were chances against him which he never contemplated, and to show what they were we must pass him on his journey; arriving at Goldsworthy whilst the afternoon was still sunny. There was only one figure in the saloon; a very pretty one in a very disconsolate mood. This was pretty Polly Lightfoot; and if her bright eyes were more bright than usual with a few liquid brilliants it was no great wonder, for the only hearts that had taught her to love them had cause to be more sad than her own. But presently she wiped away her tears and tried to look cheerful, for she heard a hand upon the door, and speedily found herself in the presence of Tom Philpot.

The only hearts that had taught her to love them did we say? Well, Polly knew more about it than we did.

"Oh, welcome!" she exclaimed, "after these many days. What tidings do you bring of Aaron?"

"Alas, none! I have come to report an entire failure. Every village, house, hut, or hiding place has been searched without finding a trace. But I am still of Mr. Crowley's opinion that he is not dead, for every inch of the ashes about Cheek's

premises has been turned over and not a scrap of him has come to light. Where is Mr. Crowley?"

"Gone to give evidence before the Grand Jury at Lymp-ton, and we are dying to know if they find true bills. He will wait for Mr. Badger, who telegraphed this morning that he could not be there till the last train, and should want him to attend to one of the witnesses till he is called in court."

"Which of them?"

"We do not know."

"Who is to conduct you to-morrow?"

"The Lord Lieutenant and the Sheriff have both called to say they will be in waiting for Lady Goldfield at a private entrance."

"How are Lady Goldfield and Miss Longland?"

"Distracted! I have left Lucy toiling for a moment's rest. Lady Goldfield has wandered into the garden; I believe to take a last look of the scenes in which she hoped to pass the remainder of her dear life. We have no business to be curious, but we have both of us suspicions which cause us a new misery. She has been talking to us about the pleasures of many places abroad, and we fear she is resolved to relieve Lord Goldfield of his troubles by parting from Goldsworthy."

"Part from her home! Does Lord Goldfield know this?"

"Less than any of us. He never leaves his room, for as fast as his health gets better his mind gets

worse. He has more leisure to look round him and see the wide ruin he has caused whilst he imagined he was only risking his own. The suffering of a noble mother, who never thinks of herself but always of him, appears, at times, to sting him into frenzy. One while, he is all spirit, and full of projects to push his way in the world like other men; and then comes the honour of his family which he feels he has degraded past redemption; his mother's peace of mind destroyed for ever; imaginary curses of wronged dependents, defrauded of their just expectations; the scorn of his high connections for a son so degenerate; the pity, the contempt, the derision of all the world, who will hold him up as a warning till his name is forgotten. All this might form sound hopes for the future, if a future is in store for him; but I feel frightful doubts of whether he will give it fair play."

"Good Heavens! You think he may be rash enough——"

"I tremble every moment he is left to himself; and I am not the only one who does so. Lady Goldfield and Mr. Crowley are almost always with him, and often take Lucy and me, but—I wish you would go up to him. He often asks for you. You have been a favourite ever since he was a boy, and hunted with your father."

"Who is with him now?"

"I do not know. I could not go by myself. I hope his servant."

Tom became nervous. It was a day of uncom-

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mon agitation, and therefore a very dangerous one. Hard as it was to sacrifice the happy moment of confidence which, of late, he had so seldom enjoyed, he made no more inquiries, and was gone without a word.

## CHAPTER XIII.

JUST as he mounted the stairs and entered a grand gallery of bed-rooms, he saw the young lord rushing madly out of one of the doors, with a letter in his hand, and dashing into his own, which he slammed behind him. The first was left open, and Tom saw as he passed it, that it was not a bed-chamber, but a lady's boudoir. On the table was an open desk, which appeared to have been rifled, for letters and various papers were scattered about it. It was an odd circumstance, and the action of Lord Goldfield made it alarming.

In his momentary pause there was a light at the farther end of the gallery, now dim with the dusk of evening, and a servant came up by a back staircase, with candles for his master's room. He stood still to see whether he came out; and in a few seconds he did so, with an intimation that he would not be wanted again. Tom then advanced, and announced himself with a knock. He was rather impatiently desired to come in.

The young man was seated, as we have before

seen him, at a table covered with papers, but he was more pale and disordered, and hurriedly threw down a pen, and the letter, blank side uppermost, over something he desired to conceal. His dressing case, very sumptuously furnished with everything an extravagant taste could think of, stood open at his elbow, and the first object to catch a curious eye was a beautiful little travelling pistol, let into the velvet padding of the lid, with a vacancy for its fellow. It was no hard matter to conjecture what was under the letter.

"Excuse my impatience to ask how you do, my lord. I was engaged to dine here as soon as I came back from a run after a stray witness, and thought you would like to hear how I prospered."

"I am very glad to see you, Tom Philpot," was the answer, in a hoarse and hollow voice; but he seemed to have no curiosity, and talked of himself with rapid and fierce hilarity.

"Look what a man of business I am! I have been squaring my accounts here, and have found a way to pay them. Nothing easier, though I've had a hard study for it. Look at all these figures, dancing over a fellow's brain, like fire-flies at midnight, and fancy what a blessing is the small ray of daylight that sweeps them all away."

Tom was a very literal genius, but he understood the figure of speech well enough by the help of the something under that letter. There was no question but he had come at a critical moment, but what was he to do now he was there? Before he



could make up his mind, the young lord tried to resume, but only got so far as "I wish," when he stopped, as if he could not trust his voice.

"What do you wish, my lord?"

"I wish," he went on, more slowly and gloomily, "I wish my dear mother had another son."

"And why so? It is enough, I should think, for life to depend on one."

"No—no, Tom; you do not know her. She is too good to depend for life upon anything but the will that gave it. She might have had a better son than I have been, for I have caused her small happiness."

"She is probably the best judge of that, for pardon me if I say that the uncalculating disposition which you have just now lamented is quite as unlikely to estimate your claims as your shortcomings. I fear I speak freely, but your lordship must recollect what I was a little while ago, before Lady Goldfield and Mr. Crowley raised me up."

"Tom, you were a gentleman always, and I wish my mother's son had been such as you."

Tom affected to laugh.

"Lady Goldfield would have had little reason to be proud of him, my lord; but she would have had a son who would have died for her."

"She would have had more; for I can do that myself."

"Yes, my lord, and take her with you."

"What a son Crowley would have made her! What an heir to my noble-minded father! Oh,

Tom, if God had only made him my elder brother, I should not have lost myself. Then my greatest ambition would have been to ride foremost with your harriers, as I used to do, when home for the holidays."

He started up and paced the room, as if he stamped on fire.

"God Almighty, I must not think! I cannot be worse than this! What think you, Tom—what think you? She is in treaty to offer up Goldsworthy as a sacrifice to Moses and Cox. To pay the penalties of my Derbies and my Legers with her last earthly comfort. Who has brought her to this? Who?"

"My lord, sit down, I beg. You'll bring your fever back!"

"I wish I could, Tom; I wish I could; for then I was mad. Where is she, my good fellow? She is not ill?"

"Never less so. Lady Goldfield is in the gardens."

"Amongst the flowers she planted for thieves to wear! In the gardens. I wish I could see her—just this once."

He went to the window, to which Tom's eye followed him, to see it was closed and securely fastened; and whilst he stood there, silent and shaking, there was a moment to turn up the letter, over which a glance sufficed to show that it related to the sale of Goldsworthy. At the bottom were scrawled the words, "Adieu, dearest mother."

Where it had lain lay the missing pistol. Tom twisted off the cap, and supplied its place with a smear from the wax candle, upon which he let down the hammer, and replaced it under the letter, as before.

"I cannot see her," said the young lord, returning to his seat, with a look more wild, and visibly impatient for his friend to take leave. "You will be late for dinner, Tom. It is time to get ready. The first bell has gone."

"If you permit me, my lord, I would rather stay with you; for you do not seem quite well."

"It is nothing. This fever is intermittent. I am quite well now."

Tom hesitated whether to charge him with his intention, or seem to trust his words and calmer demeanour; reserving to himself the liberty of listening if he tried his pistol. The latter plan seemed the least hazardous, and he went out, with as small appearance of mistrust as he could assume, taking care to leave the door ajar. He had scarcely waited a second when he heard a sound like the tic of a watch, and, immediately after it, the dull fall of the hammer. He rushed back, and found Lord Goldfield hastily extricating the fellow weapon from his dressing case. He was just in time to catch his arm, and the struggle he had expected commenced in earnest; one striving, with the fury of a maniac, to direct the muzzle to his head, and the other to wrench it aside. Tom succeeded, and quickly insured safety by pulling the trigger. The foiled

madman flung himself back in his chair, as if his last hope was to dash out his brains.

The report was echoed back by a faint shriek in the distance. It had only been loud enough, in so large a mansion, to reach the apprehensive ears of Polly Lightfoot, who was just then undergoing the polite attentions of Mr. Pinhorn. Before he could ask what was the matter, she had vanished through the door and was bounding up the stairs. Moses, for his own sake, was seized with the same terror, and followed her; but she was too fleet to be overtaken. Tom had not closed the door, and heard her coming.

"Here is no harm," he said. "A pistol went off by accident. Say nothing about it; but run and send his servant."

She continued her flight down the back way; and Tom turned to Lord Goldfield, as much like death as a living man could look. Seeing him completely overcome, and scarcely conscious, he secured the pistols, and raised the sash to let out the smoke and prevent all suspicion. He then sat down beside him, and gently placed his hand upon his shoulder.

"My lord," he said, "wake up! You have had a troubled dream."

Lord Goldfield raised his eyes as dreamily as if the tale had been a fact.

"Dream? Dream, do you say?"

"A very terrible one, my lord, as it seemed. A dream and a fit at the same time. A relapse of

your late fever. I had much ado to prevent you from dashing yourself to pieces!"

"Good God! A fit! How real it seemed! Are you sure it was a fit?"

"Of course! How could I be deceived? I was told you were often suffering from delirium, but we thought the time past. You must be very quiet, or we may have it back again."

"I cannot think it was either dream or fit. I remember it so distinctly!"

"We often do; I have had dreams as vivid as reality."

"This surely *was* reality!" And he brushed his hair from his eyes, with a hand still violently shaking. "I talked of a new mode of paying my debts to the Jew? No? Something about fire-flies and daylight, and so on?"

"Something of that sort; but I could not understand it."

"It is very strange! I went to the window to throw myself down at my mother's feet, but found it shut and fastened!"

"How could that be? It is wide open!"

"And so it is! I tried to shoot myself, and had an awful wrestle with you?"

"And yet, there you are; sitting quietly in your easy chair!"

"Tom, I must be mad! I am ready to take my oath to all this!"

"I can prove it impossible in four or five words. No one more truly loves the best of mothers. How

then in your sober senses, could you have transformed yourself into a monster, savage enough to strike her dead upon the spot? What train of reasoning could have satisfied a sane mind that a few thoughtless inadvertencies could be redeemed by the deepest and most unnatural of human crimes? For Heaven's sake, my lord, do not think yourself that monster! That carrion, coward thing that shuns a little trouble to leave all who love him to despair and horror; that changes a tomb of honour for a hole in four cross roads, with a faggot stick crammed through his accursed carcase! That bloody phantom of darkness that scares honest men from his nameless pile of stones, and makes us tremble by a Christmas fire side! No, no, no! You have only to think of this, and be assured there has been no danger of such realities here!"

The young lord hid his face in his hands, abashed and humbled; but whether fully convinced that he had been dreaming is more than we can vouch. However, he contested the matter no more, and was muttering a piteous injunction that the story should never be breathed to his most beloved mother, when, raising up his eyes in apparent thankfulness, he uttered a piercing cry.

"Hold me, Tom, hold me! The dream is coming back! Look there! It is the fiend come to fetch me before I am due! Look at that cringing skeleton, bowing and making mouths at the door!"

Tom stared, almost in dismay, for he had ex

pended so much courage in his last speech that, as Mrs. Toogood said of her wisdom, he had hardly any left. They were both springing up to lay hands on the apparition, when it made a timid step forward.

"I am afraid, gentlemen," it said, "I intrude rather abruptly. I am a Hebrew gentleman, come from my kinswoman, Miss Pinhorn, to pay my respects to Miss Lightfoot, who left me in this large gallery, which is so dark I cannot find my way back."

"Pinhorn ! a Hebrew ?" cried Lord Goldfield. "Is your name Moses ?"

"Moses, sir, if it please you."

"Moses, the friend of Cox ?"

"Captain Cox is my good friend, sir."

"And my name is Goldfield, my good friend. You are just the good friend I wanted!" With which he clutched Mr. Moses by the collar, and dragged him to the table. "Look here, my good friend, and brighten a Jew's eye with the quintessence of Tantara Castle! Here in these hieroglyphic papers are wrapped up the home and the acres of twenty noble generations, all consolidated in a few sheets of sixty per cent. compound interest. Look, my Judas, at the forty pieces for which you have swapped your soul, and paid your passage out of that window, or over the bannisters, whichever you think most agreeable."

Moses found he had got amongst the Philistines.

with a vengeance. He was too much aghast to express any preference, and had only breath to petition for a little patience whilst he took his oath.

"Take your oath you will go by one route or the other, and I promise you that for once in your life you shall not be foresworn. Take a view first of the bloodless beggar from whom you have drained the last drop of the Goldfields. When nothing is left how can you hope for mercy? When you have hollowed the bones what can you expect but the echo of your own sentence? By Heaven, Moses Pinhorn, you must be a Judas Maccabeus to brave my hands with all these villanies against you!"

"I'll take my oath——"

"To worship the Golden Calf, and graze him on the lands of Tantara. Look here, I say, look on these hellish scrawls! Three hundred thousand at sixty per cent. for barely forty thousand received! Three hundred thousand at compound interest till I can pay it off and build another Temple for Solomon!"

"I'll take my oath——"

"To tempt the downy spendthrift with a few grains of gold to the iron cage from whence he may whistle ruin to the wretched bird that hatched him."

"I'll take——"

"Blood, bones, and brains; hopes here and hereafter; misery, madness, and compound interest!"



Take all; and take them to help your downward passage from window or bannister, for a Christian keeps his promise!"

"But not un-Christian ones," interposed Tom. "Hear what he takes his oath to."

"I'll take my oath I never lent his lordship a penny!" cried the terrified Moses. "By Abraham, I have not a single claim against him."

"By Isaac, you are a lie nearer to perdition! What say you to this?" and he snatched from the table the last letter from Cox, which he read with due emphasis, and something extra on the passage for Moses—"Moses Pinhorn is clamorous for instant payment of the many thousands he lent you, and swears he will make you a bankrupt next week! What say you to that, my good friend?"

Moses was rigid to his fingers' ends. "I never lent a penny to your excellent lordship, nor to him for your lordship's accommodation. You gave your notes of hand to Cox, and all I know of them is that he gave them to me to obtain payment."

It was now the turn of Lord Goldfield and Tom to be rigid.

"Why, how is this," said the latter, who was most possessed of his senses, "these words are written by Cox himself?"

"Then Cox is a false hypocrite, and has lent monies upon usuries he is ashamed of, and made me his scapegoat."

"And is this what you swear to?" demanded Lord Goldfield.

"By all the patriarchs."

"My lord," said Tom, "nothing is more credible. If Cox had practised this extortion in his own name, he must have lost his influence to tempt you onward!"

"By my life that's true! Is this another dream?"

"Let it not trouble your good lordships. We are used to wrong, and it is our custom to return good for evil—I will prove it on the neck of this heathen. I will show that you do not owe him enough to pay Beelzebub for his brimstone, and you shall walk out of the court to-morrow as free as my Lord Judge! I have said it, and now, if I can pleasure you no more, I will pray this gentleman," for the servant had been waiting in the background, "to show me down *the stairs*. I have business with Captain Cox and must see him before the prison is shut up." Whereupon he darted out on his mission of good for evil.

Lord Goldfield was confounded. "Tom, what think you of this?"

"I think there is an old saying that when rogues fall out honest men come by their own."

"By Jupiter, it may be so, though I cannot see how."

"Trust to your lawyers, my lord — there is something in these assertions worth a consultation."

“ We’ll have it, Tom, we’ll have it. In the meantime we must go down and comfort my mother—my poor mother—before she hears news of my deeds and my dreams.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

LADY GOLDFIELD had continued strolling in the gardens and musing over the many recollections of the days she had passed there, and the many changed prospects of those which might remain to her, till it was almost dark. It was a solitary instance of such indulgence since she had first come to the resolution of immolating her happy home to the evil genius of her son ; for, never since her conference with Mr. Badger had she allowed such thoughts to weaken her sense of what high principle and enthusiastic notions of honour demanded of her. She had never changed from her first resolution that having pledged himself to ruin, no matter for whose benefit, her son was bound to meet it. Her correspondence with the lawyer had so convinced him that he had, for the first time in his practice, found a client who could look down upon legal chances more decidedly than others looked up to them, that he had been in constant dread of her placing herself in worse hands, and finally ceased to remonstrate. The letter which

Lord Goldfield had taken from her desk was to acknowledge the receipt of the title deeds, and dated several days back ; so that in her ignorance of the delays in such matters, she considered the sacrifice accomplished.

She had thus prolonged her walk under the fixed determination that it should be a last farewell, and the scene itself might, to a poetic fancy, have seemed to feel it so. The autumn flowers were dropping their leaves and hanging their heads under the first inflictions of winter ; and the trees, except some stately cedars, were worse than naked, having only a few fluttering remains of foliage, like the last hopes of those who planted them. Farther away, the bright river which wound through the park was scarcely distinguished from the objects on its banks, and lost in the rising mist.

"Even so," thought Lady Goldfield, "is another current in which we have perhaps prided too much !"

It was not the train of musing to collect consolation for her son, or to encourage the prospect she had entertained for the two unprotected girls who had no other dependence ; and yet it was indispensable to maintain her fortitude for the exigencies of the next day.

But to this endeavour there were still to be trying interruptions, which began with the quick light step of Mary Lightfoot ; who, having performed her commission for Lord Goldfield's servant, had gone hastily in search of Lady Goldfield, in order that no alarm

might reach her. She had, however, been too much alarmed herself to disguise her agitation, and was the first to bring what she came to guard against; for the first words that met her were to question what was the matter.

"Nothing, Lady Goldfield, nothing. I was only wondering what kept you out so late, and have run myself out of breath."

"There is something more than that. Something has terrified you! My son—?"

"He is quite well—quite. Only a little uneasy, like myself. I have sent his servant to him."

"Has he been alone?"

"No; Mr. Philpot has returned, and went up to him some time ago."

"Then why did they want the servant?"

"I don't know. I hear the lodge bell. Perhaps it is Mr. Crowley come back. Let me run and bring him here." And scarce knowing what she did, she was out of sight in a moment. Lady Goldfield clasped her hands, and was rushing to the house when she happily encountered Lord Goldfield and Tom.

"Henry! God help us! What does this mean? What have you been doing?"

"Nothing, dear mother, as God has willed it!"

"Henry! What mean you?"

"Only," said Tom, in haste to take up the reply. "That Mr. Pinhorn has been here, and his Lordship has turned him out of the house. That is all."

"Not quite," added Lord Goldfield, still much dis-

ordered, though he took the hint not to be too communicative. "I have learnt of late, mother, that you have held daily correspondence with that lawyer from London; and, taking it in connection with some unusual expressions of a wish to leave this place, the truth has flashed upon me that you are about to make yourself homeless to maintain the credit of a son who can no longer be a pride to you. It was hard to resist the chance that might disprove it. You will discover that your last letter is missing; let no one answer for it but the miserable fool who has so much more to answer. In that letter I have found a receipt for the title deeds of Goldsworthy. Upbraid me not, dear mother; for I come to tell you there are still hopes of saving it. This Moses Pinhorn has denied in presence of us both that he has any claim upon me, as Cox has done before, and undertaken to prove to-morrow that I owe nothing to any one."

Lady Goldfield looked at her son as if she doubted his reason, and from him to Tom who, to her surprise, confirmed what he had said.

"That you owe nothing, Henry! Then whence came the large amount you have received, and whither is to go the much larger one for which you have given your bond? Trust nothing to this mutual disavowal, though perhaps it might prove fraud in both of them. No strain of the law can exempt one of our house from doing that which he has promised—our law is our word, and we keep it,

at whatever cost. Think not to save Goldsworthy, for it is gone already."

"Gone, mother?"

"Even so, Henry. We have had our choice to part with either that or the honour of our family, and there could be no question. Do not force me to find courage for you, and prove other sons more forward to support a mother, but think how often, in times of other trouble, your fathers have lost their lands to preserve what they held dearer, and whether it is not a prouder boast to redeem than to inherit—we have our work as they had, and must we prove weaker because it is more light?"

The calm self-possession of Lady Goldfield acted rather as an aggravation of her son's troubles than a help to bear them, and Tom, seeing that he had no word to say and appeared to be almost returning to the state in which he had held a pistol to his head, came again to his aid by observing that the work to be done did not seem to be quite of the passive nature which Lady Goldfield contemplated.

"The declaration of Mr. Pinhorn," he said, "was not made under the influence of fear, for his apprehensions had passed away and given place to a feeling of vengeance against Cox for having implicated him in a fraud in which he had no benefit. He is likewise too keen in his craft to talk without a meaning, and the first thing to be done is to discover what that meaning is. It may be that the money lent to Lord Goldfield has been supplied from sources not their own and by pillage of some victim



less rapacious ; some one, most probably, who knew nothing of their doings."

It was a reasonable suggestion, and created a new feature in the dreary aspect of affairs. Lady Goldfield listened earnestly, and the more so from her anxiety to comfort her son by any fair respite, however temporary, from an event for which he was so ill prepared.

"Henry," she said, in a tone of sudden hopefulness, "do you hear this ? It has a look of common sense that shames our want of it. If neither of these persons can venture a demand upon you and no one else comes forward, here must of course have been some robbery in which, by allowing you the advantage, they would make you an accomplice. This unconscious creditor must be found, and till then the proceedings which distress you too much may be arrested, if not too late."

"God bless you, mother, and grant there may be time ! Tom, you were inspired ! You said here was matter for consultation. We must away to Lymp-ton, to Crowley, and the lawyers."

But here were more interruptions. The night which above all others should have been a night of repose, afforded small promise of it. Tom had started up in the act of listening, and again the quick step of Mary Lightfoot was heard advancing more quickly than before. They hurried forward to meet her and again demand what was the matter. She could scarcely speak, but made them understand that she had found a policeman at the lodge

making hasty inquiries if Mr. Crowley was in the house—Aaron Daunt had been seen near Oakendell and had been traced in the direction of Goldsworthy.

“Thank God,” exclaimed all, “he stops at Lymp-ton for the night!”

“Grant Heaven it may be so!” replied Polly. “But listen to those horses at the door. It is the policeman who has brought in Mr. Crowley’s, found without a rider and loose in the forest.”

With the speed of terror they were instantly on the spot, where the constable had dismounted and was ringing loudly for the servants. He repeated what Polly had said, and described the place where the man, supposed dead, had appeared, inquiring of a woodman where Crowley might be found. Lord Goldfield and Tom, who knew the forest blindfold, asked no further question but sprang upon the horses and galloped away in the darkness. All the men-servants of the house followed under the guidance of the constable; and Lady Goldfield and the exhausted Polly ran wringing their hands to the bed-side of Lucy to guard her sleep through the fearful hours of suspense.

To understand the cause of it we must return to Lymp-ton, where Crowley had been waiting since his appearance before the grand jury in the quarters bespoken for Mr. Badger, which chanced to be in the same inn where Moses likewise had his lodging. When, therefore, the latter had concluded his visit to Cox he came back to order a conveyance to Gold-

worthy; and Crowley heard the waiter calling for it to others below stairs—a carriage to Goldsworthy! Who could be going there? He looked out of his door to inquire, and found it was for Mr. Pinhorn. What could he want there? Something, most likely, in continuation of the proposal that had been made by Cox to Lord Goldfield; whereupon he immediately went down for his horse to make one of the party. But not wishing to be an interruption to the scheme, whatever it was, before it was declared, he suffered Moses to commence the journey some minutes in advance. He therefore rode only fast enough to keep him in sight, and when they entered the forest turned leisurely into a bridle path which shortened the distance. Here it was in some places dark though light in others, and especially dark when he reached a rustic gate into the thick plantations of Goldsworthy. He was dismounting to find the fastening when it opened before him, and, looking to see who had done him the good office, he leaped from his horse, and in the same action found himself grappling with the real earthly substance of Aaron Daunt. The horse, startled by the sudden movement, galloped away, and the two were left as it seemed to try once more the event of a deadly struggle.

But to Crowley's amazement, Aaron stood perfectly passive and respectful.

"I am not the man I was, sir," he said, "either in sinew or disposition. You need little trouble to

do what you will with me. Be pleased to look at me."

Crowley relaxed his grasp, for the once powerful man was wasted and broken down, with one hand in a sling, and the other supporting him on a stick.

"Aaron, how come you here; and for what purpose have you waylaid me?"

"To make such atonement as I can, sir. I have looked for you at Oakendell, and been told hereabouts, that this was the road you took this morning."

"And what is your business with me *this* time?"

"Not that of the last time, Mr. Crowley. It was then, I could believe, the business of some power beyond me to show by a poor instrument, how far hard usage may divert our nature from good to evil, and at what cost our superiors may oppress those beneath them. That I was born with more pride and feeling than they may think becoming to one in my station, can scarcely be my fault, for they are qualities which, like the elements, are good to use, if dangerous to abuse. You know my history, and can judge of my excuse in a ten years' journey down to the brink of assassination. I have to thank you for a halting-place, and am here to do you service."

"I have been told that you began it on the night of that attempt. If so, I forget and forgive it."

"It is like you, sir, and helps me to be like myself."

"Have you seen none of the bills posted about the country, offering you free pardon for your evidence against Cheek?"

"I have been to a distance, sir, and never heard of them. I was resolved to appear at all risks, but feared to be taken beforehand, which would have damaged the effect of what I had to say, as prompted by fear instead of conscience."

"Trust that to me. I am sorry for the state in which I see you, though glad, as I am surprised, to see you living. What found you in that fire, from which you escaped so strangely?"

"I found," he replied, with a glance at his maimed limbs, "some leisure to follow out the difficult course of your ventures for to-morrow; to puzzle out the forms of a court—in which I have had some experience—and turn two or three crooked lanes into a straight road. Your lawyers cannot do without my help. You have Captain Cox and Mr. Cheek to convict; the fortunes of Miss Longland to recover: the reputation of Sir Harry to place beyond doubt; the murder of my former master to account for, and some uncertain prospects of your own to secure. Besides, as I have read in a roadside newspaper, the prospects of some others."

"If you can bring about all this, Aaron, I shall thank you for that shot. You speak like one convinced!"

"I am, sir, of much of it, and have hopes for the rest. I wish to be brought in communication with your counsel in time for him to study his arrangements, and to keep myself out of sight till he finds occasion for me. That may not be if we remain here longer, for I have been seen to-day, and the forest is alive with those who hunt for me."

"Come back with me to Lympton, for the sun has gone down; and, in my company you will not be suspected. But, listen! It is some miles, and you are not in a state to walk. I thought I heard a carriage, which may perhaps take us up. We shall have one presently, for I expect a person whom you may have known,—Moses Pinhorn, the Jew money-lender."

"I know him for the greatest rogue of his tribe. He was so formerly, and is not likely to have mended his ways, which subjected him to such a world of fearful consequences that not a moment of his life has passed without dread of detection; one while for his own work, and another for his dealings in partnership. Some of these I know to have been with the prisoners now for trial, and he is coming in happy time. Beg a place with him, sir, and waken up his fears for what may befall himself. The more they need his help, the less he will dare to give it, or shrink from any means that may save him."

As he spoke, they came to the public road, where they again made a stand to listen, and scarcely spoke for the next half-hour from fear of being

overheard in the still night, which gradually became very dark. At last they distinguished the rapid hoofs of horses. The quick and practised ears of both of them perceived there were two, and of a different kind, for one came with the pounding of a cross breed, and the other with the long stride of a well-bred hunter.

"I know no horse like that," said Crowley, "except my own."

And they remained in the road till the riders came up, when Crowley called to them to stop.

"Who's there?" cried a voice, which was unmistakably Tom Philpot's.

"Tom!" replied Crowley. "Surely Tom Philpot!"

"By the Lord, and all thanks to him," returned Tom, "it is Mr. Crowley!"

"Right, Tom; and welcome back from your travels. Who is that upon my horse?"

"Harry Goldfield," was the answer, as both jumped off. "What has happened to you?"

"You shall hear by-and-bye. How came you here?"

The story of their fright and the re-appearance of Aaron with the news of Moses and his assertions, was told in very few words. They said they had passed him a mile back, and could now hear him coming.

"Then mount again, both of you, and ride for Lymp-ton, where we shall presently have business in the room engaged for Mr. Badger. Send somebody

off to Lady Goldfield to say that we are all safe, but cannot return to-night. Here is Moses, and I want him all to myself! Off with you, quick"—and they resumed their gallop.

"You have a good hint to go upon, sir," said Aaron, stepping up from the background where he had not been seen. "Lord Goldfield's account may be made to frighten him into an honest man."

The carriage came up, and Crowley, at the risk of passing for a foot-pad, summoned it to stand. Moses looked out in great terror to ask what he wanted.

"Only to warn you, sir, that two desperate characters on two stolen horses are just a-head of you, and you had better have your pistols ready."

"Pistols! I, have no pistols, and could not use them if I had."

"Indeed, sir! and the road farther on is a great deal more lonely!"

"Highwaymen! I knew they were highwaymen, nobody else could ride so fast in the dark; and they shouted as they passed us to know whether we had met the police!"

"They thought they were pursued. Really, sir, you have had a narrow escape! If you are going our way, we shall be happy to protect you as far as Lymp-ton."

"Get in, gentlemen, get in! Here's room for one inside and another on the box."

Crowley took his place by Mr. Pinhorn, whilst Aaron mounted by the driver, and the journey was continued.



The fellow-travellers never having met before there was no suspicion of design. As they trotted on, the calmness of one somewhat re-assured the other, and their conversation became more composed about dark nights and dangerous roads, and the many desperate characters that infested the forest during the assize time. It naturally led to the communication that Crowley and his friend were going to see the great trials the next day, and the conclusion that the gentleman they were escorting was going there likewise.

Mr. Pinhorn was going there in a legal capacity, and would have a great deal to do with them.

"Indeed, sir, then perhaps you can tell me whether there is any truth in the strange reports about the country that some very unlooked-for evidence will be given respecting the long absent Sir Harry Longland?"

Mr. Pinhorn turned his head rather quickly. He had not heard any reports of that kind.

"Really! I wonder at that, for they are the chief cause of the grand gathering for to-morrow—expectation is raised to the highest pitch, that certain persons, hitherto esteemed highly respectable, will be proved guilty of very villanous dealings; especially those connected with the fellow they call Captain Cox."

Moses now faced about. "Is that reported? Is it sure?"

"No doubt of the reports. It is said that Cox and some confederate have lent a great deal of some-

body else's money on usury to a young lord in this county, and that the lawyers have discovered all about it—they mean, it is said, to prove it on Cox's trial. The racing folks are betting two to one that some of them will be hanged."

Moses sat more uneasily; crossed and recrossed his legs, and could not please himself. "I never heard a word of it," he replied. "These tidings must be very recent?"

"Very, for I only heard them to-day."

"And on credible authority?"

"Oh, quite. It was the conversation of some racing men, who were Cox's greatest friends."

"Do you remember precisely what they said?"

"They said they had found him out for a great villain, and that he means to betray all who have had anything to do with him in the hope of saving himself."

"Even so! And what grounds had they for believing it?"

"Very good ones, I should say, for they know him never to have had a friend in his life whom he did not sell as soon as he could turn him to profit; and the present being his greatest necessity will, it is supposed, produce the greatest sale."

"But," said Mr. Pinhorn, changing his legs again, "they do not consider that he may at the same time be selling himself—Captain Cox has wits enough to see that."

"So it was argued, but he is known to have only wits to cheat others, none for the control of a rest-

less tongue, which, in any case of peril, does its best to run away with him. Give his jailer half a crown and you will learn as many secrets as you could screw out with the rack."

Every trial of Mr. Pinhorn's confidence increased his ruminations of how to deal with the turn which events might take, and so skilful was the use of Lord Goldfield's brief intelligence, that before the ride was over a much greater alteration was made in the plans for Captain Cox than either party had intended.

As they approached the town, and left behind them the more imminent danger of robbery and murder, Crowley received polite thanks for the protection he had afforded, and not less for his very interesting conversation, and took his leave with Aaron, by back passages to the inn. Moses directed his driver to the prison.

## CHAPTER XV.

IT was not too late for re-admission to Cox, who was almost out of his mind from the long trial of his patience.

"What have you done?" he cried. "Why do you shake your death's head? Has the girl refused?"

"I did not see the damsel."

"But you saw the other—What did *she* say?"

"She showed me the way to my Lord Goldfield."

"And what did my Lord Goldfield do?"

"He gave me my choice to go back again, out of the window or over the banisters—and truly I could expect no better, seeing that whilst I laboured for your good, you laid upon me the reproach of all these loans and usuries."

"It is a lie—I did no such thing!"

"But he showed me your own letter."

"Curse on you, Jew! How dared you read my letters?"

"Such is ever the Christian payment for the Jew's service! Perhaps it will please you better if I take it where it will be more welcome. I am

summoned to lift up my voice for the prosecution."

"And if you do perhaps I shall lift up your heels to pummel the way that is paved with good intentions. Why should I not? What have you brought me for the half of my substance?"

"I have brought you security for the other half; if you will heed good counsel."

"What counsel, then? Speak out, for I cannot answer for myself."

"You must not face these many witnesses."

"Don't you say they are coming?"

"But you need not go to meet them."

"What must I fear? Aaron and Bunckle are dead."

"Bunckle was examined before the grand jury this day; and there is a true bill, and another for the felony of the letters."

"The letters! Is Aaron here?"

"It signifies not; for there is the maid, Betsy."

"Betsy will be as true as steel."

"You must not trust her. She has given fearful evidence, and produced a letter from you which promises a great price for a false oath, and is your own evidence against yourself."

"Is Betsy false? No matter—what signify the blunders of a man in my extremity? Have they not driven me to it, and can they make me answer for their own work? Let them do their worst! Is not the town full of my friends, all here to prove a conspiracy? Will they not swear, double strong, to

establish the honour and honesty of a character upon which their own depends? Have I not made every one of their fortunes, and could I not place one and all of them in a worse predicament than my own?"

"They do not fear it. They say you have cast off all of them in their turn as soon as they could be of no farther service, and that the turn is now your own. Be prepared for every weight they can add to those which are sinking you. If they were truly friends, what would their value be? The word of one honest witness would scatter a Pandemonium of them, and you have more than one against you. What say you to the high-born maid of Broome Warren, for whose truth, report says, the jury themselves would be security?"

"What do I say? Why, I say that all they call truth is the devil's varnish for duplicity."

"That might be well, were you the only judge. But others say she was the gift of Providence to an aged and dying kinsman, and that even whilst it was blessing the performance of her sacred duties you dared an outrage for which all human pardon would be a sin."

"Beware, old hypocrite. You are not safe."

"I have no fears—your jailer guards the door. If you love not the mention of that maiden, what say you to the lofty lady of Goldsworthy who turned you from her doors for threats of other wrong which brings another charge against you as fatal as the two which would be enough without.

it? What say you to the noble youth who was too honest himself to suspect ruin from a friend? What to the character of him who thought you worthy of this prison? What to the good woman who witnessed your preparations, and so bravely risked her life to defeat them? And what to the king's officer who bore you off in chains and listened for days to your unguarded ravings? Think of all this, and whether there be hope in Israel; and then reflect what more there is to crush you. Your charge against *me* compelled me to deny it, and refutes all claim for *yourself*. Then whose monies have you been dealing with? The court will say you have done some great robbery on some person unknown, and, in the end, you will be tried for your life, with *me* as your worst accuser. You must not meet these witnesses to-morrow; you must bespeak indulgence from the court—you must plead guilty to the charge on which you are first arraigned, and the others may pass by—you must plead guilty—a short imprisonment is better than consequences so uncertain."

The Captain, who writhed terribly under these undeniable truths, was cowed and crestfallen notwithstanding his bravado.

"Are you sure there will be nothing but a short imprisonment?"

"I am sure."

"Then guilty be it; but mind you this: you have thought me more a man of sport than business, but dispossess yourself of that idea, and remember that

we sink or swim together. My accuser you dare not be. You know that a word from either would bring the same penalty on both. How, but for that, can you account for my easy consent to your terms? If I get more than a short imprisonment look to yourself. Had you treated me fairly, what need should I have had to carry off this girl?"

"Had you not made that attempt there had been no grounds for hunting out a motive."

"Say, rather, there had been none had you not furnished them with your communications at Goldsworthy."

"I should not have made them had you not wronged me and done that which placed me in great jeopardy. I am now in as great straits to repair the consequences."

"Which may be a place like this for yourself, and another field of less profitable partnership."

"I need never have mentioned this bond to you."

"Which you only did because you could make nothing of it without me."

"It is bad policy to bandy words like this, and be our own accusers when there are no other."

"I give you credit for your policy, Moses. To whom but you am I indebted for storms at sea and stone walls on land? The execrations of which you make so much, the desertion of high connections, destruction of unbounded prospects, a shameful exhibition in the felon's dock, where thousands of old acquaintance will come to mock at me, and a wind-



up which neither you nor I can foresee ;—all this do I owe to you, Moses, with the addition of half I possess in requital. It is to be sure of your half that you recommend me to plead guilty. I tell you again, look to it !”

“You have no reason in what you say, and it is no good to answer. It is locking up time, and I shall not get out.”

“A blessing for your clients if you never could. But stop a moment. Give me better news of Cheek than you do of myself. What’s to become of him ? What’s all that howling that I hear through the wall ?”

“He’s in a very bad way, if that will please you. He has broken down terribly as the time comes on.”

“And taken to psalm-singing and beating time with his head against the granite. It is what I promised him, and not far from what he promised me, though both of us have been obliged to others for its fulfilment. I did not think, Moses, that such promises came back to us with so much usury, for the greatest grief I feel is that my own part in this compact is not my own performance, though it is some comfort that he may feel the same.”

“Look you there again at your own policy ! Was it not your quarrel with Cheek that roused this Badger on our tracks, and caused my summons as a witness on this trial, and subjects me to I know not what examinations.”

“No fear, my Moses, you can swear your way

through them. 'Twill only help you one stage nearer to the place you are bound for with many a heavier load upon your back. There's one behind that wall who has outstepped you, and can describe the nearer prospect. Go, cheer him with your countenance. Give him ghostly counsel, and show him what he'll come to when he dies. Here Bolt, you brute, unlock the door."

And Mr. Pinhorn having, as he hoped, secured his interests on one side, took a harassed farewell to guard them on another. He knew Cheek to be aware that a bond had once existed, and was reasonably apprehensive that his terrors might take him out of his way to claim consideration for blurting it out.

Mr. Bolt, on the strength of old acquaintance with his worshipful prisoner, thought himself especially called upon to pay his attentions on the eve of the great event, and took his part in the visit.

"Cheek's miserable state had not been exaggerated. He was supporting himself against the wall, shivering and staring at his barred window as if it showed some hideous goblin, and when Bolt saluted him with his usual "Hope I see your worship pretty well," started round with affright, as if there were more goblins behind him.

"I hope you see the bars is all right, sir, according as you directed."

As soon as Cheek assured himself that his company consisted of flesh and blood, he recovered some

remote approach to his senses, and found breath for a few indistinct words of recognition.

"Why, what's the matter with your worship now? Have you been to sleep and had another of those dreams?"

"No," replied Cheek with a shudder, "I was quite awake!"

"Bear up, Mr. Cheek," said Mr. Pinhorn, after regarding him with silent mistrust. "This will never do before the jury. You will be found guilty before you are tried."

"Come, your worship, look after yourself, for drat me if I can tell where it is gone. You used to be a fine blustering gentleman, as always thought justice too merciful; and now that is all changed, just as you'd have it, what can you want more? It is no use to be a child again, for them as is never lives to be a man. What do you see in that window?"

Cheek was too deep in his fears to be shamed out of them, and they really had reduced him to a child or something less.

"Tell me," he almost whispered, "was that the window that Aaron jumped out of?"

"That? Not it! Aaron's window is two stories higher. He had courage, he had."

"Aye, why should I think I saw him there? He told me he was not drowned."

"Have a care, Mr. Cheek," said Mr. Pinhorn very quickly, "have a care. He never told you anything, for you have not seen him, you know,

since he was committed from Broome Warren. That is your defence."

"Of course, of course"—and he seemed to swallow up his words. "I meant—I meant——"

"What did your worship mean?"

"I meant that I had heard it when they said he had been burnt in my barn. He couldn't have told me that, you know; and that's the reason he goes about on fire. Do you think he will be here to-morrow?"

"I hope not, Mr. Cheek, if he goes about on fire?"

"What if he comes, your worship? You that never see any excuse for criminals can, of course, never have been one yourself."

"I! No; nobody can say so, unless, you see, unless they speak false."

"Mr. Cheek"—and Moses shook his head—"you have a dangerous imagination. Why should a dead man come with false evidence instead of the true?"

"But it isn't true. Nothing is true, except——"

"Except what, your worship?"

"Except that I saw him just now."

"Saw Aaron Daunt, Mr. Cheek? That is not possible."

"Your worship can't have seed nobody, for haven't I had the keys? What's there? What are you pointing at?"

"I saw him at that window!"

"Mr. Cheek, Mr. Cheek, you are as mad as Nebuchadnezzar."

"He was only just gone by as you came in."

"Do you say that you distinctly saw Aaron Daunt?"

"Not very distinctly; there was such a blaze, all green and blue, and the straws of the barn were all sticking out of him in shoots of fire."

Mr. Bolt began to enjoy some capital joke. "What, your worship, just like a rory bory allus? Dash me if you ha'n't made a devil of the lamp-lighter! He! ha! ho! And sure enough when we sees him of a dark night through them bull's-eye windows he do look enough to frighten one, and no mistake. Don't you remember, sir, we al'ays 'luminates at 'size time when the judge arrives?" And again he roared with laughter.

But Mr. Pinhorn was grave and nervous, and shook his head again.

"Mr. Cheek, you must not betray such mistakes, or the people will think you have some greater cause for fear than we yet know of."

"A joke!" cried Cheek, with a sepulchral imitation of Mr. Bolt's mirth. "A joke, to prove how little fear I have of anything!" But though he was wonderfully relieved on the subject of demonology he was very much scared at the hint he received from Mr. Pinhorn.

"Your worship had better go to bed," observed Mr. Bolt, "and sleep your jokes off, for there'll be no joking to-morrow."

"Yes," added Moses, "you must be in earnest then. We must not stop to hear any more jokes, for they will examine me against you. We must not talk of business to-night, but leave to-morrow to take care of itself. Sergeant Heaviside says there is no case to go to the jury, and you will pass through your trial as safe as Shadrach in the burning fiery furnace, or Daniel in the den of lions."

"To be sure—no doubt—but—tell me—can anything be talked of to-morrow but just the subject of the indictment?"

"It is not usual."

"What then—it is sometimes?"

"Such may have happened; but Sergeant Heaviside will take care of that."

"Yes, I have no fear. But couldn't I just see him for a last consultation?"

"We have consulted."

"Yes, but *I* haven't. The time is very near, and perhaps I may have something to say."

"You will do better to say nothing, and think of no new subjects whilst you have others to think for you. Good night, and be confident."

"No, no; you must not leave me!"

"Why, what is your worship afraid of?"

"Afraid—afraid? of nothing but the dull hours of a winter's night. At what o'clock to-morrow will this business begin?"

"There's no saying for certain when your worship's will begin. They've got to do the Captain's business for him first."

There was something not quite to Mr. Cheek's taste in this form of words, but he struggled hard to maintain the dignity of a lord of Broome Warren, made piteous efforts to laugh at his joke of the lamplighter, and even commissioned Bolt to order his carriage and four to be ready at the door of the Court House to take him home.

"Yes, sir, in course; and perhaps your worship would like to subscribe to the 'Size ball? It will be very fashionable, for the ladies do like to dance poor criminals out of the world, and send 'em off merrily. Suppose we put your name down for one of the stewards."

But before Cheek's tremulous pomposity could make him more pitiable, a bell announced the hour for shutting up, and Mr. Pinhorn was glad to take leave for other work of that momentous night. He had to examine every cranny of the law through which some skilful sharp-shooter might pick him off, and barricade the breaches through which Cox might find occasion to storm him on one side, and Lord Goldfield on the other. Besides which he had observed enough to harass him more and more at every word from his dangerous client, and desired Bolt to conduct him out.

Cheek, when his visitors turned to depart, broke down as frightfully as ever, but his efforts to detain them were of no avail. The door closed, and the bolts were shot in his face, and he sank once more against the wall. He had not reclined there long when he started and cried out at a remote and

scarcely audible yell of his own name. "Cheek," it said, "Cheek, you have no hope! Cheek, beware of Monday morning! Strike up the Hundredth Psalm! They are writing the condemned sermon! The crows are coming! Do you hear the wind whistling through your bones? Boo hoo—oo—oo!" As it happened, at that moment the wind began to howl with the dreary blast of November. The window rattled, and the old prison wailed a fancied requiem; and the wretched prisoner clawed the air madly in search of the comforters who had just locked him up. So prostrate had his wits become that he never once dissociated the voice of fate from the devilry of Cox, who appeared to think that by increasing the tortures of Cheek he might, to some extent, diminish the horrors of his own.



## CHAPTER XVI.

THE spirit that is not lightened by returning day must be sunk far in the earthy depths of misery, and both Cheek and Cox were relieved by the genial phantom chaser, the one by some accession of reason and the other by an equal dispersion of his scarce manly agonies ; they were likewise both supported for their great occasion by the humane care of the Governor and other authorities, whose compassion is seldom wanting to afford the uphill traveller a fair struggle of his natural powers in the last stage to the top, and might be likened to the skilled in surgery who surprise the unpractised by giving the appearance of life where it has passed away. The two prisoners being not so far gone as this, might be said to have been, after the examples of the race course or the ring, trained up to their best efforts for the last moment of trial. What may be the reaction in such cases we have sometimes seen, but whether it was followed out as a rule in the present one we have yet to learn. Both were provided with whatever they pleased to sustain

them, and prepared an hour before the time to receive any friends or others who might help to fortify them. The privilege was not claimed by any one in the upper ranks of society, who had neither curiosity for a private interview nor pity for the probable conclusion of their public one, but of subordinate applicants there were a great many, for it had gone abroad amongst them that the respective sentences were sure to be capital; and one agricultural heart was mollified to a "dang it, I wish no harm to those who are past doing any, and shouldn't mind saying good-bye;" and another carried natural feeling a little farther, and was reluctant that any man should carry off a load of wrong doings which might be lightened by a word of forgiveness, and which cost "nobody nothing."

Amongst these latter ones, the governor had given permission, if the prisoner pleased, to three decent women, an old one and two young ones, to pay a short visit to Cheek, and Mr. Bolt announced Mrs. Rokins and her daughter, and a poor girl from no one knew where, who said she had been Cheek's servant.

"Hallo! mother Rokins!" was the greeting of Cheek, who being a great man had feelings of quite another order; "what brings you here?"

"Why, please your worship, we didn't part, the last time I seed you, quite as friendly as we humble folks like to do, and I'm come to say I've quite forgot it, and hope you've done the same. For now as trouble has come upon you we didn't ought to

think of such things ; and I'm sure if I said or did anything amiss, I ax your Honour's pardon."

"Anything amiss ! Why, ain't it your doing that I am now in prison and going to be tried ? Wasn't it you that sent for your Mr. Crowley when I made a kindly call for my rent, which you refused to pay, and obliged me to use him as he deserved ? was it not this which made the devil knows who turn me out of the commission ; and do you suppose if I had stayed there I should have helped to commit myself here ?"

"Oh ! please, your worship, don't say things as is not true just now ! It wasn't you as treated Mr. Crowley as he deserved, but quite t'otherwise, and you had no call to do as you have done since, which I didn't come to talk about, because you'll have enough talking about it without me. I only come with my Sukey to part kindly and hope you'll think nothing more of what them lawyers wrote about, for I considered you might be glad to hear we are getting on well with the help of Mr. Crowley's washing, and don't want for nothing."

"And I'm sure, your worship," said pretty penitential Susan, "I'm very sorry for that smack I gave you, and hope you've forgot all about it, for I shall never give you another, and I'm very much obliged to you for the skim milk, which is all the same, though I didn't come for it."

"Don't think, mother Rokins, that all this cant will make you housekeeper or laundress at The Chase, for I'm not the sort of person to forget how

you behaved, and you too, you Sukey. It's too late to come for the skim milk now, for men of my station must make examples of those who don't know how to conduct themselves. It's all of no use, and so you had better be off before I give you in charge to the turnkey."

Mrs. Rokins was a proud dame, for her sphere, and if he had not, as she fully believed, been sure to be hanged on Monday, there would have been seen something like the battle of the wash tub; but whatever would have been resented from a person standing on his legs had an easy claim to her better feelings when she saw him reversed.

"Ah, Mr. Cheek," she gently said, "I ain't a going to answer. We came to do our best, but may be our best is to go away and pray that when we meet again things may be altered."

"Good-bye, Mr. Cheek," added Sukey; "I hope wherever you go you may find things to your satisfaction."

Cheek, we have long seen, was a character that admitted very different descriptions—a giant from one end of the telescope and a dwarf from the other—an ogre in the concave of the spoon, and on the convex a chap-fallen skeleton drawn out upon the rack, and the spoon changed sides as fast as eyes could follow. He was this morning the giant and the ogre because he misunderstood all visits of humanity to be only so many acknowledgments of his importance, and proofs that he could be in no peril; he had therefore no desire for sympathy, and

no thanks for pardon, and was commanding from his presence the good hearts that brought him both, when the silent girl who had given them precedence stood opposed to him and asked if he had forgotten Nelly.

"Nelly! is it *you*? Where got you these fine clothes? Not by gathering chestnuts and blackberries in the forest, I'll warrant, and not by the well-ordered life you led at Green Lane's End, before you ran away to be your own mistress—a pretty mistress you must have been to yourself, and a pretty face you must have to face it out."

"I understand your evil thoughts, Mr. Cheek," replied Nelly, who ever since her father had given himself up to the police had attended upon her friends at Goldsworthy, to which she owed her improved manners and appearance. "I understand, and wish you had no such thoughts, no memory for your meaning of new gowns except that you never dared to confess it—I came in the hope of finding you changed as the ragged girl who left your house because she saw too much to witness more—I had taken your shelter and had no mind to betray it—I tried to save you from betraying yourself, and if I took my warning to those who might prevent the evils you intended, it was not to make them fall upon yourself. I thank the mercy that frightened me away before they came. I returned now to part from you in peace, and to hope that nothing which has passed from my mind and might give pain to yours may add a grain to your present thoughts which may be heavier than I

wish to know. I've but to say good-bye.—Whatever happens here may be no hindrance to things that are better, and if poor Nelly's prayers can assist you, they shall not be wanting—Good-bye again, good-bye."

Cheek could afford no return for good wishes which implied his need of them, and though he would have thought the three forgiving souls three merciless fates, if he had ever heard of such folks, his relief at finding himself no longer alone at midnight was enough to maintain the importance which he felt becoming to a great squire. Nelly and her companions turned from him with no more words and no expression but pity at his shout to Mr. Bolt to order his coach and four and attendants to take him to the court.

"Your worship," replied Bolt, as they passed out, "didn't direct me to have it here till after you was acquitted; and as we don't know when that will be, I thought it might be time enough to send for it when it's wanted. The van will be here when the Captain is done for, and you'll have it all to yourself, except half a dozen police to take care of you; so you needn't be in a hurry. M'ap it may amuse you if I borrow the sermon what the chaplain is a-going to preach on Sunday."

Captain Cox also had his visitors who forgot their grievances to cheer him with the last intelligence of how the bets ran, and satisfy their curiosity as to the "condition in which he would come to the post." But as we have seen enough of him to form a toler-

able guess, we leave them to congratulate him on the grand figure he was about to make and the celebrity conferred by all the newspapers in the kingdom. The obliquitous taste of sporting gentlemen who would rather be notorious in any way than live in unenvied obscurity, may be less interesting to our reader than the bedside of a sufferer who only does not die because it is her duty to live.

We need not repeat with what intense watchfulness Lucy Longland had been nursed up to this last hour, beyond which fate could offer nothing for better or for worse, or that singular courage which seemed to sustain itself by feeding on the fair form it inhabited. She had passed the night in that calmness which is the sure reward of those who repose their trust in Providence, only showing the occupation of her sleeping thoughts by a low and thankful murmur of "Father" and "To-morrow."

In the grey of the morning, Mary Lightfoot, who had always slept in the same room, was standing ready dressed on one side of her bed and Lady Goldfield on the other, but did not awaken her till the last moment they could afford.

She rose with some appearance of suppressed agitation, but soon subdued it to preserve the energies so nearly called for. For the same reason she spoke but little; for the love she felt for those who helped her simple toilet was better spoken by her eyes. She was soon ready to descend with them to their early breakfast; and, at eight o'clock, the carriage was ready to convey them to Lympton.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE morning was bright and frosty; every rag within the radius of Cheek's celebrity was fluttering to the scene of the great holiday, and Broome Warren whistled its way to jail as gaily as it had sometimes whistled back. Lymp-ton was blocked up by wheels of all descriptions; waggon loads of farmers and their families; county equipages; squires' dog-carts; rural costermongers; horses, donkeys, and all grades of humanity, kicking, beseeching, clamouring, and only preserving their equilibrium by a crush on all sides at once. Let any one who has witnessed both pastimes pronounce which is the liveliest—a fair day, when all the world goes out of its mind for penny trumpets, or a county assize, when old acquaintance are preparing their last dying speech.

The space before the court-house—which lay a little off the street—had been fenced off by railings, which hundreds were jumping over, whilst a strong staff of police were inviting other hundreds to jump back again. But, when the



Goldsworthy carriage was distinguished, a more combined exertion cleared the way to a private entrance, and here the most important officers of the county were in waiting to receive Lady Goldfield.

The party were speedily led out of sight to their places on the bench, where Lady Goldfield and Mary Lightfoot seated Lucy between them, with the lord lieutenant and the sheriff close at hand. The judge's chair and desk were in the centre, and in front was a partially drawn red curtain, which afforded a view of the court.

The sight, independent of other considerations, would, to eyes which had never looked upon a larger assemblage than the very limited congregation of Broome Warren church, have been appalling from its multitude. The galleries were crowded with all the leading families within a day's journey, and the body of the court was packed with scarce room for another head. The triple row of forms by the long table beneath the bench, were filled with more law than had ever been seen there, and the only places unoccupied were the jury box, the dock, and the small elevation for the witnesses.

Crowley and Lord Goldfield and Tom Philpot were seen conversing with Mr. Badger and the counsel, a calm, gentlemanly man, who was no doubt Mr. Lincoln, the lawyer who had been honoured by the commendations of Mr. Bolt. His manner was watched most intently, for every one was aware of his heavy responsibilities, but it

showed no discomposure, for he spoke leisurely, and was once or twice observed to smile. Crowley himself betrayed no symptoms of misgiving, but rather a recovery of the confidence which had been so much damaged. Mr. Badger, meanwhile, was not to be scrutinised, for his head was bent over a sheet of foolscap, writing, as it seemed, some supplement to Lincoln's brief, of materials newly come to hand—a supposition borne out by Lord Goldfield and Tom, who were whispering in both his ears.

They had not long been so engaged when the clock struck nine, and the two lawyers turned to their respective stations. Presently a flourish of trumpets was heard, and understood to be a signal to clear the way for the judge; and in a few more minutes a private door opened, and a tall, dignified personage in scarlet and ermine stood forward to receive the homage of the bar. He was of a grave age and sedate demeanour, and his marked features and piercing eye were calculated to impress many people with a belief that justice looked best in her bandage. As soon as he had taken his seat, and the court became silent, he exchanged a few words with a black gown beneath him; and then a solemn call was made for the first case, which was that of Samuel Cox. The once self-satisfied captain was immediately ushered in between two jailors, and placed in the dock, where he shrank before a volley of eyes which many a malefactor would have gladly exchanged for a shower of bullets.

To those who had only seen him in his days of

presumption he would scarcely have been known, though he had recovered the flash costume he had worn on his visit to Goldsworthy, and left at Sea Cliff, to make his best impression; sea fare and prison mishaps had caused it to fit him without a strain, and his contour, which had been round and exulting in the field of fortune, was lank and disheartened, as if he had, at last, made a very bad book.

"Samuel Cox," demanded the official, usually answered with a falsehood that has legal absolution; "how say you? Are you guilty or not guilty?"

To the extreme surprise of every one present, and the unspeakable relief of Lucy and her friends, he was *this* time answered with the truth, for Cox, with a voice and manner most inoffensive and deprecating, first petitioned that his great devotion to the prosecutrix, and his strong desire to replace her in the affluent circumstances once enjoyed by her family, might plead in extenuation, and then very penitently acknowledged that he *was* guilty.

A burly old gentleman, with a broad, red face, instantly bounced up to object that this plea was in direct opposition to his counsel, for he had entertained no doubt of an acquittal. He disclaimed it *in toto*, and denounced it as badly advised, if not for some sinister purpose. He insisted that the needless fears of his client had been tampered with; that he was too confused to see he was taking the part of the prosecution, and passing

sentence on himself; and that a plea so unaccountable should be reversed.

"My lord," said the captain, lost between his two advisers, "may I beg permission to confer with my solicitor?"

"Let him come forward," replied the judge; and a messenger went out to bring him.

"My lord," said Lincoln, "Mr. Pinhorn was subpœnaed as a witness in the case, though he subsequently accepted the office of solicitor for the defence, and has been removed from the court amongst the other witnesses. Perhaps your lordship may think there is something anomalous in the union of two such opposite duties, which Mr. Pinhorn may be required to explain, and likewise the reason why the prisoner must have another person to tell him whether he is guilty or innocent."

"No—no—no!" cried Moses, entering at the last word, and running to the dock. "Are you insane?" he hissed in Cox's ear. "You must not say you are innocent! You will ruin everything! You must keep to guilty, or you will bring down the Goldfields, who is waiting to heap a great bad character on your head, and open the whole history of the accommodations and the bonds, and you will be hanged! Hold your peace and keep to guilty, and you will only have the short imprisonment."

"Prisoner," resumed the judge, "you must make up your mind, for we cannot be delayed by con-

sultations which ought to have been concluded before you came into court."

Moses took these words as a hint to disappear, though he knew it was not their intention, and shuffled back to the place from whence he had come, whilst Cox, seeing he should gain nothing by hesitation, again admitted himself to be guilty.

The judge straightway prepared to pronounce sentence, when Sergeant Heaviside bounced up again.

"My lord," he cried, "I beg to submit that the usual course is to postpone sentence in such cases to the last day of the session, in order to give the prisoner the advantage of such evidence as may be brought forward on the important point of character. I understand he has a very extended connection amongst persons of the highest station, many of whom will, without doubt, be in attendance."

"We cannot lose time for them; but if they are here, let them come forward."

"The Earl of Goldfield is here," observed Lincoln, with a slightly satirical look, "and has known the prisoner intimately enough to say more about him than anybody else can."

"Then let Lord Goldfield be called."

"No, my lord, no," interposed the Captain; "I had rather not. I do not wish to be under obligations."

"Then, brother Heaviside, I see no occasion for delay."

"Samuel Cox," he proceeded, turning to the dock

with an ominously deep voice, "you have pleaded guilty to three great offences,—one of attempted housebreaking, another of subornation of robbery, and the third, and much the worst, of plotting and—but for providential protection—effecting the atrocious crime of abduction. To either of these offences the law awards a heavy sentence, and taking them together, you can scarcely expect a light one."

The Captain pricked up his ears.

"The course you have taken in sparing the time of the Court is, perhaps, the wisest; for though it can in no degree affect the sentence, it shortens the duration of your exposure where you now stand. All efforts to impress an offender so desperate with any compunctions of conscience or regard for that character to which I see you pretend, would be hopeless and wasted. The only useful advice is punishment."

"My lord, I withdraw my plea."

"It is too late. I cannot allow a step, taken after such long deliberation, to be reversed in the moment you find justice treading on your heels. You will leave this country for a term of ten years. Take him away."

"Ten years!" shrieked the Captain, almost springing out of the dock, and struggling with his jailors for another word. "Ten years! I shall never come back! I am transported for life! Moses! Moses Pinhorn, stand out and confess it was you, not I, that pleaded guilty! Get me a

fair trial, and remember, I told you to beware! Stop him before he runs away! Search his lodgings! He has brought down a deed for hundreds of thousands to sell to me and go halves! Stop him! Stop him!"

The judge made a sign, and the Captain and his noise were soon out of sight and hearing. At the same instant Lincoln rose to state that the suspicions of the prosecution ran very much in a line with the convict Cox's assertions, and to beg that proper officers might be sent on the search directed.

"Search for whatever may be needful to the ends of justice," replied the judge; and two or three officers of the Court, with our active old friend Badger at their head, were speedily on their way to obey him.

The short work that had been made of the first event of the day was a sad disappointment to the lovers of sensation, who had looked forward to the thrilling tale of Lucy, the daring attack of Cox and his ruffians, and the valorous defence of Crowley; but they were about to have ample amends in the second, which was introduced by a still more impressive call for Christopher Cheek.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**T**HE ambition of Mr. Cheek to be the most conspicuous man in the county was immediately accomplished, though he did not seem very proud of it. In spite of his furs and gilded chains he looked very ghastly, and his small eyes blinked at the people from his farthest corner as if every one of them were prepared to fly at him. But he was brought to bay, and had no resource but to do battle. So when he was asked the question which had so puzzled Captain Cox, he indignantly answered "Not guilty."

The next business was to empanel a jury, which was not very easy, for several of the persons called were excused, some on the ground that they were not unprejudiced by former dealings with him, and some because they were challenged by himself, for no visible reason except that he had a strong objection to everybody in that capacity. The judge at last finding the number summoned to select from almost exhausted, cut the matter short by ordering



into the box the last twelve on the list, and the trial commenced.

With the particulars of the charge we are too well acquainted to need a repetition of Lincoln's statement of what he meant to prove. He had every talent to make it interesting, though it was generally known before, and carried away his hearers very far from the after endeavours of his bluff opponent to recall them.

The evidence of Crowley, which succeeded, was likewise listened to with extreme attention, and almost with terror, though the peril was past; for he was the last man whom the society of those parts could afford for a dead shot, briefly as he had mixed in it. However the law and the jury might determine, it was clear that all other sympathies were on the right side, and that a failure of conviction would be something more than public disappointment.

Nevertheless, a failure it seemed likely to be from the exhibition of the next witness, whose distended flounce and bustle were squeezed into the box with some difficulty, and as much amusement as the gravity of the case permitted. This personage was, of course, the rainbow-tinted lady of the Vicarage, who appeared to be decorated with a feather from every variety of the poultry show, and to consider herself—as for some golden moments she was—the most important lady present, pluming her radiance with a look of scorn on the leading county families

to show them what they had lost in not coveting her patronage. It was a sore trial of the counsel's patience to keep her tongue to any point in particular, for never before had it found so grand an occasion for the display of its conversational powers. The amazement of all who heard her at the volubility which could neither be followed nor comprehended was mistaken for admiration; and often as she was pulled up and brought back to the post she broke away upon another false start. It was not before she had established very reasonable doubts of anything she might say, that something like a connected tale of her discoveries could be patched together, and then, with the satisfied look of having made a great impression, she was gladly turned over to the courtesies of the learned sergeant, who had a character to retrieve after the mishap of his first client.

Mr. Heaviside had been on the watch, like a jealous house-dog, for every movement of Crowley's, but had shown too much sagacity to snap at an object which kept out of range; but now, if we may so speak, he stepped out of his kennel, creaming all over with a sneer which showed his teeth so pleasantly that Mrs. Bloomer received it quite in the way of gallantry.

"Good morning, madam," he said.

Mrs. Bloomer returned his salutation, and prepared for fresh distinction.

"You are, I believe, the owner of that wonderful

bird so widely celebrated under the title of Jim Crow?"

Mrs. Bloomer acknowledged the proud fact, and entered into his history from the time he was an egg, which Mr. Heaviside pronounced to be extremely edifying.

"It is said that his great value tempted some wicked person to steal him?"

"It is perfectly true; and I have not the least doubt it was the prisoner, who afterwards bribed two other wicked persons to be punished for him."

The sergeant was much shocked. "I should think, ma'am, it must have incensed you very much against him?"

"Oh my, I should think so!"

"Of course. And is very hard to forgive?"

"I never have, and never will forgive him."

The sergeant turned round with a grimace upon the jury, and Lincoln looked as if it would have done him good to wring Jim Crow's neck, and his owner's too.

But Mrs. Bloomer had not done yet, and continued more and more to enjoy her distinction, for which, she had no doubt, she was envied by all around her; and admitted successively, in answer to the polite enquiries, that she had always been determined to be revenged on Mr. Cheek for a great many other things. He had estranged her husband and taught him shocking habits; cheated him of his tithes, written her impertinent letters, and—

when she was peeping through the chink, had absolutely put her in fear of her life. Yes, it was a very windy night, and she was very much confused and frightened, and hardly knew what she was at. It was very difficult to hear anything, but she believed she had some talent for putting odds and ends together, and making out a meaning where other people might be at a loss. No, people could not be blamed for putting the worst constructions when they had received such immense provocations. Yes, she would stick at nothing if she could only transport him. In fine, Sergeant Heaviside bowed, and wished her another polite good morning; upon which she bowed and smiled, and was packing up her flounce to descend, much gratified, when Mr. Lincoln begged the pleasure of another word.

"Pray, madam, do you know what made the learned sergeant so civil?"

Mrs. Bloomer supposed it was natural politeness.

"Oh yes; he is very polite—nobody more so. But had you no suspicion that he was working, like a thief in the dark, to steal away your character?"

"Steal away my character?"

"Yes, ma'am, and he has stolen it. I am sorry to say it is utterly gone. And now, if you please, you may go too."

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the astonished lady, flinging her eyes at the laughers all about her, and detecting the insidious Mr. Heaviside amongst

the heartiest. "Well! did I ever! Catch me here again!" and down from her elevation and off through the admiring crowd she spurned and scratched her exit.

It was a bad beginning for the prosecution; and, when the commodore was called, his examiner took special care not to trust the other side with quite so fair a field as the last. He began by forestalling all the dangerous questions that could be asked, and, before he arrived at the barn and subsequent events, made his witness give a detailed account of all his life and adventures. The story had quite enough romance in it to be heard with much attention; particularly the jump out of the jail window, for which he was thought justified by the brutal amusement of his turnkey; and by the time he was running into the business of the day, Mr. Bunckle had conjured up a pretty fair breeze.

"And now," said Lincoln, "be good enough to tell the jury whether you are under any particular obligations to Mr. Crowley."

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Let us know what they are."

"I was tempted by a large sum of money to assist in carrying away a young lady as was a great friend of his'n, and he took me in the fact."

"Do you consider that an obligation?"

"Not exactly that, sir; but the way he did it was."

"And how did he do it?"

"Why, sir, he did it as I never seen it done afore."

He saw my poor girl and my little boy a breaking of their hearts, and almost dead with hunger and hardship, and he couldn't stand it—he promised me he'd take care of 'em, and gave me good advice, as if he would have spared me if he could; and if other justices had done the same, I should have been a better man."

The muscles of the commodore's visage, which was not unlike the knot of an old apple-tree, were seen to crinkle up and down with some sensation which he could only restrain by a hoarse cough.

"We are a rough set, sir," he continued, "and ain't used to be talked to in that manner; and justices don't commonly carry home our poor little children in their own arms; and that, I think, is an obligation."

"I think so too, Mr. Bunckle, and I respect you for your sense of it. Has Mr. Crowley given you any money for coming here?"

"No, sir, he hasn't; but I've had a plenty from what he gave my children whilst I was in jail."

"Has he promised you anything?"

"Nothing, sir—I've not seen him since the night I warned him of his danger."

"Very good—we will now turn to that night."

The evidence from this point was a simple relation of what we know, but it was given with a readiness and apparent incapacity for invention which afforded a good counterpoise to the heavy loss in Mrs. Bloomer. Lincoln sat down well satisfied, and the

sergeant rose, much less so, to make what he could of the dangerous witness.

"You were aware," he said, "of Aaron Daunt's intention to attempt the life of Mr. Crowley before you came to the barn—why did you not warn Mr. Crowley without that loss of time?"

"Because, sir, I only suspected—Aaron did not speak positive, but only as if he wanted to find out whether I would do anything to prevent him; and so I thought I would take a look into the barn to see what he was doing."

"The wind was very loud, I believe?"

"Quite a roarer, sir."

"Then how did you hear what passed?"

"Well, sir, I didn't hear half of it; but I heard all that I have said I did."

"And how came you to meet Mrs. Bloomer there?"

"Why, I was a feeling my way in the dark, and put my arms round her."

"And was there no previous arrangement?"

"No. If there had a been, I suppose she wouldn't have kicked up such a squeal. Though I don't deny we got pretty sociable at last."

There was an indication of mirth, which showed that the commodore was not going down in the world, and the sergeant became rather impatient.

"Can you tell me," he said, as a last resource, "anything that may tend to corroborate all this statement?"

"Why, no, sir; I can't tell you anything that

*may*, but I can tell you something that *might* have done so."

"And what is that?"

"Well, sir, I think if your head had been in Mr. Crowley's hat, or got that lick from Mr. Crowley's fist which turned Aaron wrong side uppermost, you'd have had corroboration enough."

As this blunt response raised a demonstration on the wrong side, Mr. Heavyside told him he might go down.

He was followed by the two or three policemen, who gave their evidence creditably, though it seemed much weakened in the eyes of the jury by the mischievous efforts of the sergeant. His manœuvres tended to show that, placing all due faith in them, they had heard no conversation between the prisoner and Aaron which proved the crime to have been attempted on commission. And that nothing was more natural than Aaron's flight from the scene of his great peril to seek shelter and protection from one who had formerly held a good opinion of him, and might perhaps be induced to take his version of the story in preference to any other. If conversations had been overheard which involved the prisoner in suspicion it was to be remembered that lawyers very often received confidences quite as guilty, and were considered bound in honour not to divulge them. The one little circumstance to upset this theory was Cheek's assertion that Aaron had stolen the gun, whereas it was now proved that he had lent it to him, as had



been witnessed by Bunckle. But this fact, of course, slipped Mr. Heaviside's memory, and was only recalled to it in re-examination, when Lincoln gave him good cause to recollect it in future, and again effected some change in the aspect of the jury. But the event of the trial was, at this stage, by no means certain, as it depended only upon a drunken old smuggler, who had shown that for a bribe he could be anything worse, and the new police, who, we have before remarked, were at their first institution looked upon with no friendly eyes. The case for the prosecution, however, was not yet closed, and something else was coming in reference to motives for the crime, which soon caused opinions to be more decided.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THIS new interest in the trial was caused by a call for Lucy, who rose with perfect calmness, and was led in profound silence by the Lord Lieutenant to her conspicuous station in front of the Bench, where the touching traits of her beauty awakened in all around her a sentiment far more creditable than the craving of mere curiosity. They awakened something else in Mr. Cheek. Something that stole away the assumption of insulted dignity, and changed his face to a clammy likeness in wax. His long experience of her depressed nature had made him too sure that she would never have courage to appear against him, but her collected presence at this untoward moment reminded him of all she *could* say, and all that she no doubt *would* say.

"My lord," objected Sergeant Heaviside, plunging up again, to the peril of his learned friends, right and left, "before this young lady is sworn, I submit that her evidence is inadmissible."

"Why so, brother Heaviside?"

"Because, my lord, every person in court will bear me witness that she has been present during the whole of the proceedings."

"My lord," replied Lincoln, "I am sorry the learned sergeant believes it possible that Miss Longland can be biassed by anything she has heard, or any consideration whatever. But I can relieve his mind by the assurance that it is not my purpose to ask a single question connected with anything that has gone before."

"Then let Miss Longland be sworn."

And Mr. Heaviside plunged down again, and seemed to smash his client.

Lucy kissed the book, and fixed her unshrinking regard upon her questioner as if no other person had been present.

"Miss Longland," he said, "I believe I need not ask you if this is the first time you have occupied such a position as that in which you now stand?"

"It is the first," replied Lucy, in her low melodious voice, which was another of her many charms.

"Nor need I remind you that it is the one of all others most calculated to confuse the faculties of persons much more experienced; or that justice, both on the part of the prisoner and the prosecution, requires you to preserve your own in the clear self-possession which I presume is natural to them. You are, I think, the daughter of Sir Harry Longland?"

"His only child." The accents were tremulous,

and there was a slight struggle to maintain composure, in which the counsel endeavoured to assist her with the half smile which accompanied his next question.

"You do not look quite old enough to object to telling us your age."

"I am not quite twenty-two."

"Are your parents living?"

The question was thought barbarous; but Lincoln had his object, and could not spare her, though his manner did much to support her.

"I lost my mother at a very early age."

"And your father—is he living?"

The struggle increased, and the tears began to drop from her eyes.

"Take time, young lady," interposed the judge.

"Take time; no one wishes to give you pain."

The deep, kind words had a good effect, for they broke through the convulsive effort to restrain her feelings, and nothing was heard for some moments but the low and piteous sound of weeping. When she had recovered herself, she answered the question without needing its repetition.

"I cannot tell whether my father is living."

"Can any one?"

"No one but Mr. Cheek, who maintains that he is still in correspondence with him."

"Do you believe that statement?"

"I do not."

"And why do you not?"

"Because, if my father had been living, he would not have dared to insult me."

"We will return to that presently. I must now inquire when you last saw Sir Harry."

"Not since I was six years old."

"And where have you been living since?"

"With my uncle and aunt Bloomer."

"The lady who has been examined here this morning?"

"Yes."

"Doubtless Mrs. Bloomer has been a kind, able, and affectionate guide and protectress; such as to command your full confidence?"

Lucy looked much distressed; and all who had seen Mrs. Bloomer were quite aware of the cause—the judge not less than others.

"Young lady," he said, in the same encouraging tone, "it is right to tell you that you are at liberty to decline answering any questions with which the Court is willing to dispense. I am sure the learned counsel will not press you——"

"I beg pardon, my lord," replied Lincoln, who was satisfied with the effect of Lucy's silence, "I do not press it. You found every reason for confidence in the affection of Mr. Bloomer?"

"His affection has been unbounded."

"And your confidence in his guidance?"

"My uncle has, for some years, suffered much in health." She hung her head, and seemed to pray forbearance.

"I have heard his health is now restored?"

"It was so, perfectly, when I last saw him." And here again was a bitter burst of tears, and another pause.

"Since when did his recovery commence?"

"Since he ceased to associate with Mr. Cheek."

Lincoln glanced slightly at the jury, who were keenly alive to every syllable, and then went on to inquire what friends she could have appealed to in case of necessity, and drew from her that she had not had one till within the last three months—that since she had possessed a mind she had found nothing else to depend upon.

"We will now revert, Miss Longland, to the insult which, as an unguided orphan, you received from the prisoner."

Lucy's look assumed a prouder expression, mingled with indignant shame; and her eyes were dried and her colour became deeper as she told the story of Cheek's insolent and daring pretensions, up to the moment when he cowered beneath the presence of Mrs. Toogood and her servant.

"And there was no one to whom you could complain of his encroachments before?"

"If there had been, I should not have dared. For years he held a terrible dominion over my fears, and I could only defy it in the last extremity. He paralyzed me by a basely affected concern for my father's reputation—for his very life, at the hands of justice; and pretended a hideous secret, known only to himself, that my father had, years before, *murdered* a false friend, named Downton."

The style in which she hurled this long kept, agonizing secret before the world astounded more persons than the prisoner. The whole court was in commotion. Every one pressed forward for a better view, and many tongues were loud and ungovernable. The first distinct voice was that of the judge, commanding silence, which he only obtained by warning the disturbers that he should consider them partizans of the prisoner. Then Cheek, driven wild by these public execrations, burst into furious denial that he had ever pretended any secret of the kind, and swore that the tale was invented for the purpose of this prosecution. A malignant falsehood for which the witness was suborned, else why was it never heard of till she knew this Crowley? A proof that the accusation was founded upon malice and totally incredible!

Heaviside, who had the long table between them, made an acrobatic jump upon it, and off to the dock, where he placed a large hand upon the foaming mouth of his client, and seemed violently to explain that whatever falsehoods he uttered would bring down fresh evidence against him. Lincoln made no attempt to interrupt, but listened patiently and paused, after the table had again cracked under the agile sergeant, to give Cheek an opportunity for as much more denial as he pleased. Prosecutors often profit by the old proverb, touching "rope enough;" and so did Lincoln, who then continued his questions.

"We now proceed, Miss Longland, directly to

the information for which we have invited you here; which is whether you are aware that the prisoner has any particular cause for ill-will against Mr. Crowley?"

She blushed deeper than ever, but knew it was no time for coyness.

"I know not," she replied, "whether I am myself sufficient cause."

"You have told us that you repelled him with scorn and abhorrence."

"I did."

"I am sorry to press you so hard; but I *must* ask whether you have formed any engagement since?"

"Conditionally, on the removal of all stain from the reputation of my father."

"We will attend to that in good time. One question more, and I will trouble you no further. With *whom* have you formed this engagement?"

Her reply was very low, but it was followed by much louder murmurs of satisfaction.

"With Mr. Crowley."

"Miss Longland, I have done."

He now turned his eyes upon Heaviside; but the sergeant had seen the temper of all around him towards both prisoner and witness, and preferred running no risk. Lucy was handed back to her seat.

"I hope, my lord," continued Lincoln, "that I have asked no question to which the answer could in any way be influenced by the evidence which



went before. The witness has had nothing to corroborate ; but I must now endeavour to find something in corroboration of herself," and he called Moses Pinhorn.

## CHAPTER XX.

MR. PINHORN, with his usual placidity, glided up to the witness box. But he had no sooner got there than he underwent a remarkable change. He had, as we have said, brought down with him from London some valuable documents to deliver up to Cox on the completion of their bargain for half shares. These had been carefully tied up in his professional green bag, which had been crammed, in its day, with more ugly contents than any green bag of the Old Bailey. He had left it in the charge of Reuben, who had been brought down for the special purpose, and he now saw it placed, in conformity with the judge's direction, upon the barrister's table. Reuben was standing meekly beside it, and making a mute mouth to advise his parent that if there was any cat in it he had better let her out before she scratched him. He was asked whether he had ever been acquainted with a Mr. John Downton.

"Perfectly well," he replied.

"Of what nature was your acquaintance?"

"It was various. I sometimes acted as his solicitor."

"Did you ever, in that capacity, draw out a deed for him, in relation to Sir Harry Longland?"

"I did."

"How long ago?"

"About fifteen years."

"Be good enough to tell us the purport of it."

"It was a deed of assignment to Sir Harry Longland, or his nearest of kin, of whatever property might belong to him at the time of his death."

"Was that property of any great amount?"

"Of none whatever, as I understood at that time; but, at his death, it amounted to very much monies."

"What became of that deed?"

"I sent it, by my son, to Sir Harry."

"Did you ever hear of it afterwards?"

"It was returned, with an angry message that I knew it to be worthless."

"Did you restore it to Downton?"

"I did not. For, though Sir Harry placed no value on it, I thought his successors might. As it was no good to them as long as he lived, I considered it would be safest in my hands."

"Do you believe Sir Harry to be still living?"

"So Mr. Sheeks assures me."

"And how do you account for suffering another person to take possession of the property as heir-at-law?"

"I applied to Mr. Sheeks for Sir Harry's address, thinking that my information of the unexpected

magnitude of the sum conveyed to him might tempt him to retract his refusal, but never could obtain it, or any answer but that he knew Sir Harry would never change his mind; though, if I would give him the deed, he would go abroad to him and try his persuasions."

"You thought that too obliging?"

Moses smiled—if a ghost may be said to smile, and answered "Yes." It was his purpose to deliver it to Miss Longland, whenever she became of age; which Sheeks assured him, very recently, would not be for a long time. He had told Captain Cox, from the beginning, that he would have to refund.

"Where is that deed now?"

"I have brought it here, because I thought it might be inquired for, and you will find it in that bag."

Honest Moses! He had spoken, during the last five minutes, nothing but the truth! And then Sergeant Heaviside spread out his broad and portentous wings to swoop upon the marplot who had spoilt his first cause; notwithstanding his friendly claims for having given him his brief—his intention being merely to prove the deed a forgery and subject his friend to the consequences; which might be justified in law, though not exactly in gratitude. Attention, however, was too much engrossed by the green bag to be diverted by legal terrorism.

"I observed," he began, "that you were sworn on the Old Testament. You are therefore, I suppose, of the Hebrew persuasion?"

It was the stereotyped commencement when a Jew was on the wrong side, and Moses answered it with the bland smile due to an old acquaintance.

"I am of that persuasion."

"Oh!" replied the sergeant, staring round the court with the usual grimace, which is meant to say, "here's a rogue who would stick at nothing." "You said you were a solicitor. Have you any other profession?"

"I discount bills."

"Oh!" repeated the sergeant, almost whistling with amazement, and satisfied that pounce the second had been a *coup de grace*. But Moses still lived, and unruffled as ever. Nobody valued the evidence a whit the less; for that deed in the bag had quite taken the wind out of the learned gentleman's sails. No change of tactics could either sink or damage it; though he proved over and over again that the witness was the most likely sinner in the world to fabricate all he deposed to. The only result he produced was an amusing parallel between Moses the usurer and Izaak the angler, both of them mounted on a safe bank and calmly playing a huge pike that was making a mighty splash to swallow them. There was some disposition to applaud the professor of the gentle craft, and Pike thought it best to break loose.

Lincoln, in the meantime, had untied the bag and drawn out the parchment. But he was not disposed to reveal its contents till he had called another witness or two to remove any chance doubts

that might have been thrown upon it by the cross-examination, and when Moses had made his mild reverence and glided down again, his son Reuben was summoned in his place.

"You are, I believe, the son of the last witness?"

Reuben bowed.

"And have been sworn as a Christian?"

"I have, sir."

"How long have you been a Christian?"

"All my life, sir, in heart, but only recently professed."

"Have you any recollection of having carried a deed from your father to Sir Harry Longland, and how long ago?"

"About fifteen years ago I carried a deed to that gentleman."

"To what effect?"

"I am unable to say. I was a very young man, and my father did not think it prudent to employ me in matters of business. I acted only as a messenger."

"What is your age now?"

"I am thirty-five."

"You were twenty, then, when you went to Sir Harry, and should have a perfect recollection of it."

"I have, sir, a very perfect one, for circumstances occurred to impress the scene upon my mind very strongly."

"Relate what they were."

"I was shown to a room in which I was much

struck by the contrast of great splendour with suffering much greater in the appearance of those I saw there. Sir Harry looked very pale and ill, and seemed too much affected to perceive my entrance, for whilst I was waiting to perform my errand, he continued talking like a man distracted. 'There is no help for it,' he said; 'we must part this very night. I must fly from all the world holds dear to me, and die a lonely wanderer, with no other comfort than the trust that God will protect those of whom my follies have made me unworthy.'

"To whom was this addressed?"

"To a lady who sat by his side, holding his hand, and looking up in the face he strove to hide."

"About what might have been her age, and what was her appearance?"

"She seemed not more than five or six and twenty, and would have been very beautiful had she not been wasted and pale, and almost death-like."

"Was any one else present?"

"A gentleman, who held the other hand of the lady, and called her sister. Sir Harry called him Bloomer; opposite to them sat Mr. Cheek, looking over accounts, and groaning at each new document; more, as I thought, than was necessary. And in the room was a nurse-maid crying bitterly, and striving, at the same time, to cheer a beautiful little girl, whom I supposed to be Sir Harry's daughter, because he started up and took her in his arms, and told her he would soon come back and bring her

play-things. It was then he first saw me and received what I had brought."

"What did he do with it?"

"He showed it in great scorn to Mr. Cheek, and said that Downton did it in mockery, and was a greater villain than he thought him, and flung it down and stamped upon it."

"Should you know that nurse again if you were to see her?"

"I cannot tell, sir; it is many years ago."

"Look round the court and see if she is here."

Reuben did as desired, and after considerable scrutiny, stopped suddenly at a face close to him. It was the face of our old acquaintance, Mrs. Rokins.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, unmindful, and probably quite ignorant, of the rules of a court, "I didn't think that anybody would have knowed me now; I was not so bad to look on then; but now that I've grown old and gray, and lost all my teeth, it *is* a wonder—that it is—that anybody should know me, better, almost, than I know myself."

Being admonished by an officer that she was out of all order, she hastened to apologise.

"I ask your pardon, gentlefolks, I won't do it again; but fourteen years hence, you'll all be proud if anybody knows you from one another!" and then the good dame was quiet.

"My lord," said Lincoln, "perhaps I should ask pardon too; but I have required the witness to be thus graphic in order to meet any doubts that may be expressed of whether he really was sent with



this deed to Sir Harry Longland fifteen years ago, and not newly instructed to support a forgery." Then, resuming his examination, he asked what was eventually done with the deed.

"I was ordered, sir, to take it back again, with a peremptory desire that my father was never to insult Sir Harry again with any communication from Mr. Downton."

"And did you so?"

"I did, sir."

"And when did you see it last?"

"Never, sir, till this moment, when I see it in your hand."

"I have nothing more to ask."

Neither had the sergeant, for his questions had been anticipated.

Mrs. Rokins was then called, and bustled up to the box as if she meant business.

The first questions related to her position in Sir Harry's family, and whether she had been present at all the examination of the last witness.

"Oh yes, your honour; I heerd every word of it."

"Then, my lord," said the sergeant, "I contend that this evidence cannot be received. It is really intolerable in the prosecution to place witnesses in the hearing of each other to show them what they are expected to say."

"Heart alive," interrupted the honest dame, "I ain't a going to say nothing as that gentleman has said, except that I seed him there. He has forgot the best part."

The sergeant said no more, but sat down in the hope that he should now find an assailable point, and that Mrs. Rokins would overshoot her mark, like Mrs. Bloomer. Lincoln himself looked a little anxious, for she had already said all that he wanted in her recognition of Reuben. He would willingly have ordered her down if he had not felt it would look like apprehension.

"Well, Mrs. Rokins, and what is the best part?"

"Lord love your honour, I'll tell you in no time; and if you just look at that paper, or whatever it is, that you have in your hand you'll see that I tell you Bible truth. Sir Harry only give it back to Mr. What's-his-name there because it was too tough to tear. He tried two or three times as hard as he was able, but could only tear an inch or so, when he said it was such greasy stuff he must give it up—now you only look."

Lincoln almost trembled as he unfolded it; but when he held it up there was the tear, sure enough. It was conclusive testimony to the truth of Reuben, and he sat down, and Sergeant Heaviside got up.

"So, Mrs. Rokins, it seems you are quite right."

"In course I am, your honour."

"No doubt of it, Mrs. Rokins, and will be quite as right when you tell me how long it is since you saw this parchment the last time."

"Well, sir, I can't exactly say."

"Was it yesterday or the day before?"

"Lord bless you, neither one nor t'other. The last time I see it was when Sir Harry tore it; but

whether that's fourteen or fifteen years ago, I can't recollect."

"You swear you have not seen it since?"

"To be sure not—hain't I said so?"

Heaviside said no more, for he saw it would be to no purpose.

From the first words in which Reuben described Sir Harry's last day at home, the general gaze had been so suddenly and simultaneously directed to the place where Lucy sat, that it might almost have been thought to cast a flash of light on it, though perhaps this light proceeded from the intelligence as sudden in her own eyes, for she instantly recalled the whole scene and could have sworn to every word that passed. In the apprehension of all who looked upon her she evidently did so, for her look was not less intelligible than her words would have been—and the glance of Lady Goldfield and her friends confirmed the impression. It was a telling one against Cheek, as was evident both in his own face and that of his counsel.

"My lord," said Lincoln, "I believe the authenticity of this deed is now established, but it is right before we examine it, to state a fact which adds much to its importance. A decree in Chancery has been obtained for setting aside the recent sale of the Broome Warren estate, so that, released from the hands of Sir Harry Longland's creditors by the funds dishonestly appropriated by Cox, and from the mock purchase made by the prisoner, it is now included in the provisions here made. If

any doubts have existed of the prisoner's temptation to adopt desperate means for the prize to which he aspired in Miss Longland, I think this may remove them."

The judge took the deed and read it hastily.

"This," he said, "is the strangest incident that has occurred in any trial I remember. How long is it since Sir Harry Longland was heard of?"

"About twelve years," replied Lincoln.

"If he died at that period, what motive are you prepared to assign for the prisoner's assertion to the contrary?"

"We can prove, my lord, that he stopped, and in that case appropriated to himself, as agent to the estate in question, the handsome allowance made to Sir Harry by his creditors."

"How long has Downton been dead?"

"From about the date of Sir Harry's disappearance."

"Whatever fortune is conveyed by this deed, and whatever properties or profits may have been acquired by its suppression, together with the accumulated interest since Downton's death, and likewise the accumulation of all sums stopped for the alleged benefit of Sir Harry Longland, are now, in the event of his death, centred wholly in the young lady who has just been standing before us."

"My lord," said Lincoln, arresting a tumultuous demonstration, "I crave silence for another moment. I have not yet done with the witness,—Mr. Pinhorn, senior." Moses returned to the box. "You

perceive, Mr. Pinhorn, that we have satisfactorily accounted for the abstraction of large sums from the property conveyed by the late Mr. Downton, inasmuch as they have fairly purchased from Sir Harry's creditors the family estate, and it may be fortunate for you that such is the case. I have now to ask you whether you are aware of the abstraction of any other sums, and for what purpose. Your answer may explain something you said, in another place, last night, and spare us the necessity of confronting you with Captain Cox."

Moses having been thoroughly awakened from his long dream of half shares, saw no farther impediment to a hope of recovering his own failing credit.

"There were," he replied, "many sums abstracted, which I discovered had been lent by Captain Cox to Lord Goldfield."

"Well, sir, we will not ask how you discovered that. But how do you know the accommodations to Lord Goldfield were from that particular source?"

"Because Captain Cox had no other, and lived, up to his uncle's death, upon a small allowance."

"Very good. And what did you do upon this discovery?"

"I warned him to replace them."

"And did he so?"

"He did win them back from Lord Goldfield as fast as he lent them, and I saw them re-invested."

"Very good, Mr. Pinhorn; and again very fortu-

nate. Can you inform us to what extent Lord Goldfield is now indebted to Captain Cox?"

"To the extent of the usuries, but nothing more."

"And these usuries are to be levied upon money which did not belong to him?"

"That is the truth."

"I suppose then we may alter the word usuries into robberies?"

"That is the truth also."

"Then Lord Goldfield, whose ruin has made such a noise in the world, has paid his debts in full."

"He has paid them in full, and is no more ruined than the Bank of England. He will bear witness that I told him so last night."

"Thank you, sir; I have nothing more to ask. You may go down."

The public joy—which had begun to explode when Lucy, in one necromantic moment, was hailed lady of the lands of her fathers—had only been restrained by the manner of Lincoln, which showed that his triumph was not completed, and when the miraculous turn for the house of Goldfield so suddenly burst upon it, the shouts were tumultuous. The cries of congratulation, which the judge had neither power nor inclination to silence, could not have been more universal had the same fortune befallen every soul in court. Lady Goldfield and Lucy, and the almost screaming Polly Lightfoot, forgetful of the multitude, clasped each other

in their arms ; and the other important persons on the bench—who now amounted to a good many—grouped themselves around them in a general disorder, which, in such a place, was perhaps never witnessed before. The first face in which the glow of transport subsided was the pale and lovely one of Lucy. Where was her father ? There was no blessed triumph for him ; and his history remained in the same gloom that had blighted her from the days of childhood ! [She was the Peri that had won the gates of Paradise, and found them closed.

## CHAPTER XXI.

**B**UT the trial was not over yet. The main issue, which was whether Cheek was guilty of conspiring to murder Crowley, was only so far affected by the examination of Lucy as might afford a strong presumption against him. The direct evidence still rested almost entirely upon Bunckle, and this was now to be strengthened, and Lucy's assertions to be more positively verified, which was a difficult matter in the face of Cheek's contradiction, and only to be settled by relative credibility. The prosecution had foreseen this contradiction, and arranged the order of the witnesses accordingly, keeping what was more irresistible to follow her, instead of preceding, as in ordinary cases it would have done. They had another and much greater object in view, which was to make Cheek's story against Sir Harry a legitimate part and parcel of the charge upon which he was indicted.

To accomplish these ends, Lincoln now appalled his audience by calling, as it seemed, upon a wit-



ness from the dead; and his call was straightway answered by the apparition of Aaron Daunt. He was received with demonstrations of terror, for he was scarred and scorched in a manner that made life a miracle. His hair was entirely singed from his head, one of his hands was in a sling, and the other contracted as if he had not yet power to straighten it; and though the present he had received from Crowley, at the hands of Nelly, had enabled him to appear in decent clothing, his movements showed perfectly what must be the state of the frame within it. But his courage was too high to care for what he considered trifles, and he stood unmoved upon his pedestal above the crowd, like the figure of a man in cast iron.

Not such was the appearance of Cheek, for his pulses seemed to strike fire that flared out of his eyes, more dazzling than the torches that were now darting through the dark court to light up the gas. In a few moments a bright blaze intensified the reflection of the mirror slanting over him, and revealed every self-accusing quiver of his countenance. His counsel stared as if he would rather have seen a spectre than a living man, and considered such odds against him a very unwarrantable surprise.

Preliminaries being disposed of, Lincoln began the examination by asking Aaron whether he was acquainted with the prisoner. He was answered that no one knew him better.

“How long have you known him?”

"Nearly twenty years."

"Where did your acquaintance commence?"

"At Broome Warren Chase, where I often attended my master on long visits."

"What was your master's name, and where is he?"

"His name was Downton. He was murdered twelve years ago on the beach at Dover."

"Were you his servant at that time?"

"I was."

"Relate what you remember of that circumstance."

The sergeant scrambled up.

"My lord, I cannot see what on earth the murder of a Mr. Downton, which happened a dozen years ago, can have to do with a case which occurred in the present month, unless it is to tire out and confuse the jury, till they mistake one for the other."

It was an unlucky speech, for the jury did not like to be thought liable to such mistakes; and Mr. Nib, the attorney, whom we have seen before, and who was now sitting as their foreman, begged his lordship would pardon him for saying that they particularly desired to hear something of that murder, as Miss Longland's evidence had been strongly contradicted in respect to it; and, in justice to both parties, it was important to hear everything that could bear upon it.

"I quite agree with you, sir, and am glad to see so much intelligence," answered the judge. "It is my duty and desire to grudge no time to enquiry

which the counsel, who have studied the case more than we have, may think necessary."

The sergeant scrambled down again, and Lincoln resumed.

"Your lordship and the jury have correctly divined our intentions, and I will now repeat my desire."

The answer was long and circumstantial, and continued down to the period at which Aaron left London with his master, on the duelling expedition described by Lucy some chapters back; from thence we will take it up *verbatim*.

"We came to Dover about mid-day, and put up at the chief hotel, where we found three or four other persons waiting for us. I knew they were professional money lenders, and soon discovered that my master had not come to fight, but to entrap the gentleman he had so wronged and ruined; and I resolved to defeat the plot. My master himself unwarily assisted, by sending me round to all the other hotels, to learn whether Sir Harry had yet arrived. In one of them I met Mr. Cheek, who was expecting him. Knowing him to be in Sir Harry's confidence, I gave him notice of what was intended, that he might be on the watch for every boat from France, and warn Sir Harry back again. It happened to be a stormy day, and the sea soon became too dangerous to cross. Towards night it was impossible, and Mr. Downton was very impatient. He went several times to the beach to look out, and continued to do so till a very late hour,

though there was no light but the foam of the waves. We sat up till past two o'clock in the morning, when the London mail came in, and one of the persons who alighted was Mr. Cheek, who had been in Dover all day. He came into the house a good deal disturbed, as I thought, and I asked the guard and coachman where they had taken him up. I found he had walked out to meet them, and I believed it was to conceal how long he had been at Dover. I thought it odd, and he saw I did, and cautioned me in a friendly manner not to speak of it, for fear it should come to the ears of my master that he had held communication with me, and do me mischief.

"My master had then been absent on the beach for nearly two hours, and his friends were apprehensive that something must have happened. Some of us went out in search, and after awhile we found him lying dead and almost stiff. He had been shot, more than an hour before."

Many persons turned quickly to the dock, and then to one another.

"Had you any suspicion of who had done that deed?"

"I hardly knew whether I had or not at the time. Cheek's conduct was strange, but I thought it might have been caused by anxiety for Sir Harry, who was very likely to have been lost."

"Did you entertain any suspicion at any time afterwards?"

"I did; but none more positive till I returned to

Broome Warren after a ten years' transportation, on a charge which, during my absence, had been proved false. I went to Mr. Cheek as an old acquaintance, for relief in my necessity, and he nearly fell into fits at the sight of me. It was then plain that he had cause to fear me. I was the more startled by an accidental conversation with Miss Longland, the same night, when I helped her uncle home from Mr. Cheek's house. I told her my name, which she had known in childhood, and she was in much agitation. She asked me whether she had any reason to live in apprehension of Cheek, and I perceived, from some unwary words, that she was in great terror about her father and Mr. Downton. This set me to watch Cheek closely, and I was soon convinced he had led her to fear that her father had committed the crime. This strengthened my belief against himself. I resolved to hesitate no longer, and set off the next day to see what could be discovered at Dover."

"And what transpired there?"

"I found the landlord still living. On mentioning the almost forgotten murder he immediately recollected me, from my rather uncommon stature, and also from something peculiar in the manner with which I had enquired for an arrival from France. What he told me he is here to repeat. The waiter, he said, had left him, but was well worth seeking, as he had made observations of an ugly nature on some stranger in the house. I was determined on finding this man, but, as it might take

time, I returned to tell Miss Longland what I had done. In this I was disappointed. She was away on a visit, and I never saw her, for by another false charge I was again sent to prison. From thence I escaped, and took refuge in a barn belonging to Cheek. Here I again fell in with him."

From hence the examination varied in nothing from what had already been given, and continued to Aaron's escape, when Cheek was taken into custody.

"What then became of you?"

"I returned to the forest, where I learnt from John Bunckle that he had been present at Cheek's examination before the magistrates, where he had accused me of stealing his gun, and there was great want of a tin box, which, it was feared, would be melted in the fire. I knew it well, for I had seen him busied with it, and had seen it that night in the open flooring of the barn. It might contain, I thought, both the means of vengeance and of justice, and I resolved at all risks to save it. My limbs can show the scorching."

"Did you recover that box?"

"I did not. I found the place where I had seen it, but it was melted, and everything in it consumed, except one or two articles which were not perishable."

"What were they?"

"One of them was the steel plate of a pocket-book, which had belonged to my former master."

All that had been said through the trial made nothing like the impression of these words.

"How do you know it belonged to him?"

"Because his name is engraved upon it."

"Had he any pocket-book so engraved?"

"He had; and it was the only property missing from his person when we found him. He always carried it in his breast-pocket, and used to say that it contained a fortune in bets, and a list of the many investments he had made."

"Was this well known?"

"It was known to everybody, for he never talked of anything so much as his money. And whoever shot him knew well enough where to look for the account of it; for the great coat, and the one beneath, had been unbuttoned at the breast, and no other part of the dress had been touched."

"Did you take what you had found to the magistrates?"

"I did not. I was accused of robbery and attempted murder, and was obliged to bide my time. I took it to Mr. Badger, the solicitor of Sir Harry, but found he had gone to Oakendell. I then went to Dover again, to see if that waiter had been heard of, and found him. He returned with me yesterday to Mr. Badger, whom I also found, and is now here."

"What did you do with that plate?"

"I have it here."

"Let me see it," said the judge.

And Aaron took from his pocket a paper parcel

containing all the relics he had collected, amongst which was the blackened morsel scarce larger than half-a-crown, and engraved with the name of John Downton. After spelling over the inscription, with a look which showed the importance he attached to it, he sent it to the jury.

Sergeant Heaviside perceived the effect produced by it, and rose with vehemence to protest against the line of examination, as not only irrelevant to the trial in process, but absolutely involving a charge against the prisoner of a crime for which he was not indicted; and for which, in case of such indictment, he would have to go before another court.

"You are undoubtedly right, brother Heaviside," replied the judge, "in your last point, for if the prisoner is charged with a capital crime in the county of Kent, he will of course be moved from hence to take his trial at Maidstone, which will give you some days to prepare your defence. With respect to the course pursued here, I can by no means admit its irrelevancy. I hold it, on the contrary, to be imperatively necessary to the confirmation of a very chief witness, whom the prisoner has charged with false evidence. If, in the course of establishing that witness's credit we come incidentally upon facts detrimental to his own, we cannot help it any more than we can pronounce judgment on them."

The sergeant was again silenced, and the prisoner supported himself by clinging fast to his bar. They



were neither of them noticed, for every heart leaped to the place where Lucy had sunk on the bosom of Lady Goldfield, and all was confusion. They essayed to take her out, but she passionately resisted, and her imploring accents drew more tears from all who heard her than the moans of many a culprit.

Cheek, in the meantime, was not too prostrate to see the effect of that small steel plate. He again lost all control of himself, and took his case into his own hands, demanding who could prove that Sir Harry Longland had not likewise been at Dover on the day before the murder, and afterwards given him the charge of that pocket-book—too dangerous to keep in his own hands, but too valuable to suggest a risk for a faithful agent? Had it not the day before been calm enough to cross the channel? Had not the provocation been offered to Sir Harry? Had not the challenge proceeded from *him*? Was it not he who sought the vengeance, and was his agent, who came by his command, with his case of pistols, to suffer for the act for which he had no motive? True, he had denied his awful communication to Miss Longland, but had she not done worse in betraying his confidence, only made to control a tongue that was for ever talking of her father, whose safety depended upon silence? Was he to blame if his fidelity and friendship forced him to deny a fact so fatal? She must take the consequence of her rashness! He must admit the truth in his own defence! Sir Harry Longland's

was the hand that committed that murder, and Miss Longland's silence for years was a proof that she believed it true.

His terrible extremity had made him more eloquent if not so deep as his counsel, and visibly created some indecision amongst the jury, who being chiefly provincial tradesmen and persons of that standing, are often seen to be more staggered by strong assertion than steadied by sober argument. Sergeant Heaviside began to recover his confidence in the final harangue he was to make for the defence, for though the cross questions he had first to launch at Aaron were mere hail-stones on a rock, that sent them back in the teeth of the tempest, he felt the convulsions of Cheek to have thrown up one of those mysterious eruptions from the deep which sometimes astonish the world with a new found land, and that if it generally disappears as suddenly as it rises was pretty sure to be an unassailable rampart as long as he should want it. Nothing that he lost in his conflict with Aaron could tell against this vantage ground, and when he had sufficiently stunned his hearers with rhetorical intonations and terrified them with his last grimace, he flung himself down in his seat with a flaring flush of defiance.

## CHAPTER XXI.

CHEEK, though so far from a reasonable being during Aaron's examination, had now reason enough to perceive that his own wild interruption and the revived energies of his counsel had produced great embarrassment upon the faces of every one around him, not even excepting the hitherto self-possessed counsel against him. Lincoln, for the first time appeared doubtful of how to meet what he had no means of contradicting, for the witnesses whom Aaron had brought from Dover had to speak of a time long passed, and could hardly be expected to have memories that would not leave many openings for dangerous cross-examination which might turn them against himself. Still notwithstanding the strong evidence he had brought forward and the universal belief in it, his case was decidedly weakened, for belief is nothing in law without proof to sustain it, and he had no choice left but to run the hazard; and accordingly he called the Dover landlord.

The landlord had a perfect recollection of the murder and likewise of Aaron, for the reasons which

Aaron himself had just mentioned. He also recollected that a gentleman who gave no name had lodged with him the day before and the day after the event. He remembered he was out late on that particular night because they had been obliged to keep the house open for him, and that when he came in he said he had been detained at another hotel, where there was a great stir about somebody who was said to have been shot upon the beach. It was a terrible thing that people could not walk about so near the town without being murdered, and he hoped with all his heart the villain would be found out. It had frightened him so that he had hardly dared to come back by himself, and was so agitated that he should be glad of a stiff glass of gin and water to set him up.

"Had you any farther conversation with him?"

"No, sir, I never had any but this I speak of, for he kept himself to himself, and I didn't like him well enough to intrude. There was something about him, I can't exactly say what, that made me keep my distance. I could not help thinking that he spoke very strongly about the affair for a person who had no concern in it, bad as it was, and that it was very odd it should make him sick enough to require gin and water."

"Did you suspect him to be the very man he wished to see found out?"

"Well, sir, I believe I had some thoughts of that kind, but as I had so little to go upon it might have got me into trouble to speak of them."

"Should you know him if you saw him again?"

"I can't say whether I should or not. It's a long time ago, and folks who drink gin and water are apt to change more than others."

"Look at the prisoner and tell me whether he is the man."

The landlord looked for some time, and then shook his head.

"I can't say, sir. He is about the same height but a good deal stouter; though, to be sure, most people get stouter as they grow older. If I was to see him walked out I could tell better, for the walk of my customer was something particular."

"In what way?"

"Well, he had a slouch or a stoop, as if he had lost something and was always looking for it; but, perhaps, it may be of no use to say that, now that I've spoken of it, for you see it might make him as bolt upright as a May-pole."

"Will you swear one way or the other—that you do or do not recognize him?"

"No, sir, I can't; but I'll swear I think he recognizes me."

"Why so?"

"Because there's no occasion that I can see to put on so many faces when the gentleman knows we only want one. And then the more I look at him the more he takes the colour of my customer when he said he was frightened."

"Observing that, do you swear to him now?"

"Why, no, sir; I can't say I do; for if anybody

was to stare in my face for something to hang me I think I should turn as yellow as that gentleman."

The "other side" began to laugh, and after a few more questions, Lincoln saw there was nothing to be done with him. As he had done no harm he was not cross-questioned, but every one had seen enough to feel that Cheek had made another narrow escape.

The two waiters swore boldly that he was very like the suspected customer, and one of them went far enough to be very dangerous. He had taken in the gin and water and found the stranger in such a nervous state that when he opened the door he sprang up from his chair and ran towards the window. He said he hoped he had not entered too suddenly and startled him from sleep, and was answered in a confused manner that it was true he had been asleep, though he had been stamping heavily about the room before the door was opened. What the witness had said was only to avoid suspicion that he had thought the action very remarkable.

"Did you see anything more?"

"Yes, sir. Half an hour after, I went to the room again to ask if anything more was wanted, in case I should find the gentleman still sitting up, but more to see if he was gone to bed, for it was then three o'clock. He again started violently, and I saw he was wiping out the pan of a pistol. This time I didn't know what to say, and he saved me the necessity of saying anything. He told me in the

same hurried way that he had rung for a bed candle, but he certainly had not, for the bells were over my head in the hall where I had been waiting. He then went on to wonder why there was not a better police at Dover: that there seemed to be nothing but cutthroats, and nobody ought to sleep without a pistol under his pillow. He had unpacked his own and was just loading them and should take care to lock his door."

"Was Dover so full of danger?"

"I never heard of any before that night."

"Did he go to bed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you form any more suspicions?"

"I did, sir. I was the principal waiter, and my sleeping-place was below stairs, as security for the plate in use. The maid-servants slept above. I had not been there long when I was awakened by a knock at the door. One of them had come down in alarm, and said that she believed the strange gentleman was taken ill, for she had heard odd noises in his room. I was soon ready, and followed her cautiously that we might not be heard by the rest of the house, and we both stopped at the door to listen. For a few moments we heard nothing but the sounds of a heavy and disturbed sleep, when all at once we were startled by a low and fearful exclamation of, 'Hark!'"

The waiter, as is often the case in that class of men, was a very intelligent one, and grew more

animated as he went on. He was listened to with great attention.

"We thought we had been heard, and were creeping away when the voice began again. 'A rough night,' it said, or rather gargled in the throat, 'How the wind roars!' And we could distinguish the sound of shuddering and writhing till the bed seemed coming down. Then all was quiet for a moment, but the grinding of teeth. The next words were, 'Surely he will be here to see if the boat is lost—no danger of that, the fool! There's more for himself! Hush! I saw him in that flash of the moon! Stand still! It blows a hurricane—they could not hear a pistol!' There was a long lull, and we thought the dream, or whatever it was, had passed away. We thought we had better go back to our rooms, when the voice broke out again in a frightful whisper—'What's this? His pocket-book! Nobody sees—run, for your life, run.' And once more the bed shook till the curtain-rings jingled. There was another interval of grinding teeth, which was presently succeeded by exclamations more dreadful. 'Ha!' he cried out, 'what do you do here? They told me you were dead! What should a dead man care about his daughter! Who groaned that secret in the grave? You could not bribe him with your bones! Leave me alone! Away to your coffin—yah!' The words rose louder into shrieks of agony, and our terror at such imaginations was little less, perhaps, than might have been caused by the visions themselves. The girl screamed out, and we



dashed open the door, and shook him with all our might, for he struggled very long, as if he still believed himself in the clutch which had seemed to choke him. By degrees his throes abated, and his eyes glared in our dim light. 'Where am I,' he at last said, in complete exhaustion. 'Is this Dover?' I told him it was, and tried to persuade him that a change of position might allow him to sleep better. 'Sleep!' he answered. 'I've had sleep enough! Did I talk in my sleep?' 'A little, sir'—and he shook almost as much as before. 'Hark you both—there's money in my pocket. Take what you will, but tell nobody of the malady I'm subject to. I fear it is epileptic, and that might be a great injury to a man in business. Sometimes I have thought myself King Herod slaughtering the Innocents—sometimes I've been Judas Iscariot. Whatever you do, don't tell! And don't leave me! Take as much as you like, but don't leave me!"

Lincoln had not interrupted a word of this long account, for he saw the impression it was making, and he now only asked "What more?"

"When he was more quiet, sir, he enquired if anybody had been 'after him,' which he altered into 'anybody to call upon him.' I answered that if he expected any one the visit would probably be later, as it was still only four o'clock. 'Later,' he replied, staring and breathing quick; 'yes, of course, I meant yesterday.' 'Only the person you saw, sir, who called himself Aaron Daunt.'"

"Stop," said Lincoln, "we have it in his evidence

that he went to see Mr. Cheek, and Cheek therefore must have been the name of your dreamer."

Heaviside fiercely jumped up to declare the inference most unjustifiable, and of a piece with all the proceedings, from end to end. The hotel at Dover must have had many inmates, and the prisoner, if he was truly there, was no more than others to be selected for a scape-goat.

He would have gone on with a storm, but the judge stopped him with an admonition that whatever unfairness might be alleged, it was equally unfair to assail the prosecution till his turn came; and the sergeant sat down and knitted his bushy brows in dissent. The waiter, however, having little more to say, was soon at his disposal, and he jumped up again.

"Now, sir," he said, with foaming derision, "you have told us a great deal, but you forgot to tell us how much you took from your friend's 'regimental small clothes' for the silence of a dozen years!"

"I took nothing, sir."

"Indeed! you were conscientious. It is to be hoped your partner, the chambermaid, knew her business better. How much might *she* have taken?"

"Not more than I did, sir."

"Surprisingly forgetful! Is she here now?"

"She is not."

"And why not?"

"Because she married some years ago, and we don't know what afterwards became of her."

"Did you enquire?"

"No, sir, we did not."

"I thought so. People in such a fright as you describe don't always keep to the same story. Our learned friend did not call upon you to identify the prisoner; can you tell us why?"

"Because, I suppose, he thought it would be of no use."

"Of no use—precisely."

"No doubt he knew that our house is much frequented, and that it is quite impossible to single out individuals who have come and gone every day for twelve years."

"And yet he was rather persevering with your master to swear black was white; and you, if I mistake not, have a sharper wit than he has, and can identify any two persons you ever saw. Try—it would be doing the other side a great service, and our learned friend has a breeches pocket as well as your dreamer."

The witness had spirit to return the sneer, and made no reply. The judge hoped that brother Heaviside would abstain from such hints and imputations.

"My lord, I stand corrected," replied the sergeant with mock humility, for he had come to a disagreeable feeling that the judge would sum up with a leaning to the opposition. Turning to the witness, he resumed.

"The learned gentleman under his lordship will not object to my adoption of his own words. Will

you swear one way or the other that you do or do not recognise the prisoner?"

"I have given my reasons why I cannot, and there is another still in the great difference of dress."

"Oh! I understand. How was the dreamer dressed?"

"Very much as if he had been living low in the country. In a drab shooting jacket, and drab waistcoat and trousers, none of which fitted him—very different indeed from the velvet and gold of the prisoner."

"Ah, I'm afraid the drab suit can hardly have lasted a dozen years. There is usually a 'cry of players' in the town on these occasions, and I marvel much that my learned friend did not borrow from the 'properties' to dress him according to your directions. No doubt you could have recognised him *then*, for whoever doubted that Mr. Kemble and Mr. Kean were Cardinal Wolsey, and Hamlet, Prince of Denmark? Will none of the gentlemen farmers we see about us decorate my client with a coat, waistcoat, and breeches—they will be all the better for not fitting? What, none! Then I'm afraid you must swear to him as he stands; or if you can't you had better go back to Dover,"

And Sergeant Heaviside having succeeded in obtaining a laugh, sat down, with a look of comical derision which might have won it without the aid of his wit.

Lincoln had gained as much as he expected, for

though these last witnesses would have been of great value with a personal recollection, they were nothing without it. The only part of their story that told in his favour was that Aaron had seen the Dover stranger whom he now swore to be Cheek. But Aaron's history, as we have said already, made it dangerous to depend on him; and the difficulty remained of how to deal with that incredible charge without the means of contradicting it. He could not see his way through it, but it would never do to let the case go to the jury as it stood, and with an evident design of gaining time for decision, he turned to address the judge.

"My lord," he said, "I think I may have to recall some of the witnesses, and not being prepared to say what time they may occupy, or how much I may require to address the jury, I beg to remind your lordship that it is now six o'clock, and that they have sat without intermission for nine hours. Such long confinement and their great attention, with the oppressive atmosphere of these densely crowded walls, must have much fatigued them, and I therefore petition for a short adjournment, during which they may benefit by less confined air, and an opportunity of otherwise refreshing themselves for the performance of what may still be a long and laborious duty."

"I have no objection," replied the judge; "for though long habit has inured me to very protracted sittings, I can well understand the hardship they

may be to many who bear them perhaps for the first time. The court may be adjourned for half-an-hour."

With which he ordered the prisoner to be removed, and retired from the bench.

The jury thankfully availed themselves of their short respite, and many others were glad to change their constrained positions, some to go out, and some to compare opinions with their friends, by which the formalities hitherto observed were for the time broken up.

But the relaxation was no more than personal, for there was scarcely a face in which suspense and troubled foreboding were not more marked than at any other period of the day. Lucy, who at the moment of Cheek's assertions against her father, comprising as they did her own belief in them, would willingly have died to embody a flash of lightning that might strike him dead, had been incapable at first of comprehending the full effect of his inspiration, but her perceptions were sharpened to the quick, and directed unerringly when she heard the muttered thoughts of many hundreds, and beheld the eager appeals from one to another, who made no question of the falsehood but how the law could dispose of it. Who was to prove it, and who could deny that, barring Sir Harry's former reputation for honour, it conformed in a perilous degree with probability? This was her true interpretation of the upraised hands and scowls of indignation, and she dropped her head

upon her knees with the only hope left her that she never might raise it again.

At this juncture a messenger was seen forcing his way impatiently, with a note in his hand, and when he had succeeded he held it up and called out—

“Is any gentleman here whose name is Philpot?”

Tom, who was at some distance, looking everywhere for Lord Goldfield, who had escaped him in the confusion which hailed the extraordinary turn in the fortunes of Lucy, could only make himself heard in a voice that informed everybody, and attention being thus attracted, they pushed each other aside to allow him a passage. As he received the note and read it before the multitude of curious eyes, it seemed to have a wonderful effect, for he rushed out with the messenger, regardless of whom he might overturn.

What could be the matter? Lady Goldfield became pale as death, for she had seen her son pursue Moses from the court, with the look he must have worn in the madness of the last evening, of which, in a search for her lost letter, she had learnt too much. But she still said nothing; nor did she dare to speak, when a few minutes after, the man returned in the same haste with a summons for Mr. Badger and Mr. Lincoln, who after a brief word, followed him with the much-amazed Crowley.

What could be the matter, again! Surprise

became alarm ; people looked on each other with distended eyes, but none made enquiries which none could answer ; and thus the half-hour expired. Those who had seats were actively resuming them. The jury returned as gravely as they had gone out, and Lincoln came back to his place with an evidence that something of the last importance had occurred ; but the face of a lawyer is part of his profession, and defies all scrutiny. Mr. Badger remained absent. When all was ready the judge was in his chair, and Cheek was again placed before him.

Lincoln directly began.

“ My lord, the prisoner having admitted that he impugned the testimony of Miss Longland with a falsehood, I might here have closed my case had he not in so far restoring her credit, again astonished us by declaring that she was aware of her father's guilt when she volunteered her charge of a wicked invention. Had his words been true, we should only have insulted your lordship and the jury by producing such a witness ; but we think we can defend her still, and confirm every word that has been uttered by others. We have another witness, whom in deference to the learned sergeant's objection to everything extraneous and irrelevant, we might perhaps have reserved for another court ; but if the prisoner *will* have it so, we must call him here.”

The sensation which he had previously caused by the summons of a witness whose ashes were be-



lieved to have been scattered by a whirlwind, was now fully equalled by his staking his last hope upon one long since reputed to have lost the better half of his senses, and within the last few days to have likewise vanished from the living world. The witness he now called into court was the Reverend William Bloomer.

## CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER instant, and a faint cry of transport from Lucy proclaimed his approach, and he made his entrance supported on one side by Crowley, and on the other—could it be?—by his *bonne ange* of France, whose pity had not tired till she restored her *brave* to the care of his friends. She looked much worn and dishevelled by sleepless travelling, for the only moments for repose had been during the short passage across the channel, and by snatches through a night and a day in the express train, but her eyes were bright and exulting to perceive the arrival was just in time; and the determined old Vicar came as living as his hopes to prove he was not so crazed as report had represented him. Living indeed, and with life enough to animate a graveyard, from which, when he had mounted his elevation, and flung his eyes about for a signal to begin his great work, his wild gray hair and disordered wrappings appeared to have just shot up.

“There is no need of haste, sir,” said Lincoln,

who saw that he had scarce breath to speak. "You come in very good time. Compose yourself, and I will trouble you as little as I can."

To which end he began his task with the care and deliberation he might have used to unwind a skein that is easy to break and hard to keep out of tangle, confining himself for some time to such light enquiries as might bring out the details of the recent expedition, without touching on the more important ones to follow. All that we know of his escape from London, his acquisition at the ready-made repository, the loss of his purse, the voyage, the first acquaintance with the French lady, the prison, and the manner in which he had been bought out, was extracted without producing any dangerous excitement, and in order to establish the necessary fact that, whatever he might appear, he was as sane as anyone present. This preface was not only satisfactory, but obtained both for the Vicar and the grateful womanly hand that had befriended him, a very unmistakable display of admiration. Lincoln then went more directly to business.

"You have told us, sir, that you are the Vicar of Broome Warren, and that you went to Boulogne to satisfy some grave suspicions against the prisoner. Were you acquainted with him?"

"I would to God I never had been."

"Had you any cause to think ill of him?"

"On the contrary; I thought him the best member of my congregation."

"Up to what period?"

"To the time when Lucy—that is, my niece, Miss Longland—first told me of his insolent pretensions, which he had dared to enforce by a charge against her father, my brother-in-law, of committing a murder."

"Are you acquainted with any one else who is particularly interested in the event of this trial?"

"Yes; I am acquainted with Mr. Crowley, with whom her marriage depends on it."

Lincoln turned to Sergeant Heaviside with a smile that said, "Make the best of that!" Which the sneer of the sergeant showed him fully prepared to do. But his "learned friend" went on undismayed at the consequence, and asked the Vicar whether he was quite sure that this engagement might not make him a partial witness.

"Proceed, and you will see," replied the Vicar, firmly.

"You then decided upon giving evidence for the prosecution?"

"I decided upon hunting the whole earth for it."

"You had none to give at that time?"

"None, at that time; but I have found plenty since."

"Take breath, sir; we are in no hurry. How did you obtain it?"

"By going, as I have said, to Boulogne, in search of a friend, who, I believed, could prove he lied in his throat."

"Who was that friend?"

"His name was Seymour—a clergyman, like myself, and a much better one."

"Did you find him?"

"No—he was dead."

Cheek, who had recovered his defiant look from the sneer of his counsel, had suffered a great revulsion at the name of Seymour, but the news of his death was so sudden a restorative that the sergeant and most others were chilled and thrilled as they would have been by a direct confession that Mr. Seymour's information would have been fatal. Notwithstanding the renewed expression of dignity and injured innocence, they saw that he was not so well out of the maze as he thought. It would be a great blessing for malefactors if it were a rule to try them in a mask, as was proved by the next reply.

"Then you obtained no intelligence at Boulogne?"

"Yes; by God's blessing, I did. I learnt he had left a widow, who was living very near, and could tell as much as himself. She remembered Sir Harry, because he had died in their house."

"How long before?"

"A good many years. I have brought the date."

"Why did they never inform his daughter, or yourself?"

"They did, but the letters were intercepted."

"By whom?"

“By his agent. By that man whose face confesses it. By him to whom Sir Harry referred them in his last moments. By Cheek, whom he had appointed to meet him at Dover. To him they wrote, enclosing other letters to apprise us of the death, and whatever property had been left, in money and gold ornaments, and a miniature of his wife—my sister; all to be delivered with his last blessing to my child, Lucy—to her whom you see shuddering on the breast of that noble lady—to her who has passed twelve years of her short life in wailing the desertion of a parent, forgetful of the last drop of his blood—disowned by all who had honoured him.”

The old man's burst of indignation was choked by uncontrollable emotion; but whilst it still trembled through the walls, attention was again diverted by an infuriate denial from Cheek, who, scared by the terrors closing round him, called all that was sacred to witness that he had never received a line or a token. Whatever discretion he may have possessed—and he never was famous for much—was taking rapid leave of him, and he went on like a balloon without ballast, knocking itself hither and thither, and bound for nowhere but destruction. Every word towards detection was a fabrication, though proved by the first word that followed, and the last that had gone before. There were no such people as the Seymours; Sir Harry Longland was not dead; the whole was a plot to overwhelm the man who could bring him to jus-

tice, and committed to a delirious dotard, because everybody else was afraid or ashamed of it. And in this strain he went on, in spite of all effort to stop him, as long as fear and fury allowed articulation. Lincoln was obliged to continue his questions as occasion offered.

"Pay no attention, Mr. Bloomer, to what the prisoner may say. You spoke of letters to him from Mr. Seymour; have you any proof beyond what has been told you?"

The Vicar had fixed his eyes upon Cheek with a stare of stupefaction, for it was almost impossible to identify him with the "worthy parishioner—the excellent Christian" who had so recently and for so many years poured "a leetle drop more" of consolation upon his matrimonial troubles. Sore must his condition have been to seek comfort from such a source! Yet he had sought it; and, as far as forgetfulness could answer the purpose, had found it. There are those on whom even the kindness that will not bear examination will leave a touching impression, and the Vicar answered the last question with the fatal proofs he had done so much to obtain, as if he felt them far more affecting than they need have been.

"I think," he said, "the letters may be sufficiently proved by the answers, which have been preserved as receipts; and I have them here."

Two letters were handed to the counsel, who read them carefully, and then turned to the judge.

"My lord, there must be many persons in court.

who can identify the prisoner's writing. I call on them to stand forward."

A great many of the farmers and tradespeople of Broome Warren presented themselves, and mounted the box, one after another, beside Mr. Bloomer. They all deposed on oath that both letters were written by Cheek, and came down again without further question.

"Read them," said the judge.

The first was addressed, with the Dover postmark, to the late Mr. Seymour. It expressed deep sorrow at the death of Sir Harry Longland; acknowledged a sum of money, a watch, a gold chain, and a miniature picture, and ended by requesting a certificate of the burial. The second, similarly addressed, and dated two days after, conveyed the prisoner's thanks for the said certificate, which had come safe to hand.

"What is the date of it?" demanded the judge.

"We do not know, my lord, and believe it to have been consumed in the box alluded to."

A small piercing ray flashed up from Cheek's glistening eyes, for, without the date, he might still maintain that Sir Harry had been in Dover previous to the murder.

"Can the witness," continued the judge, "say anything to this point?"

"I can, my lord."

"Did you, when at Boulogne, examine the public register?"



"I did, my lord, and found the leaf which must have contained the entry copied by Mr. Seymour carefully cut out. I have brought the clerk of that chapel who had charge of it to account for the abstraction."

"Brother Heaviside, do you wish to ask the witness any questions?"

The sergeant declined.

"Then, Mr. Bloomer, we need not detain you longer. Your evidence has been given with remarkable clearness, and your toilsome efforts for the ends of justice do you much honour."

His faithful protectress had kept her watch close by, with Crowley by her side, and they helped him speedily from the most painful scene of his life. The last witness called was the clerk from Boulogne.

His story was precisely what he had told when we last saw him, and he had come provided with the register, which he thought could explain something more. The leaf which immediately followed the missing one bore the date of November the twenty-first; Sir Harry Longland must therefore have been buried before that day, for there was no mention of him after it.

The judge asked quickly what was the date of Downton's murder.

"We have it here, my lord," replied Lincoln, with a look of relief, which showed his labours were ended. "Mr. Downton was murdered in the night of November the twenty-fourth, four days at the least after Sir Harry was buried, which I submit is

sufficient proof that the deed was not *his*. There are some other questions to ask which may perhaps suggest a reasonable guess of *whose* it was. You have told us," he continued, turning to the box, "that since you have had the care of that book it has only been examined by one individual, and that he was occupied with it long enough to put you off your usual guard?"

"I have said so, and I swear to it again."

"Have you ever seen that stranger since?"

"I see him now. It was that man in the dock."

"Do not swear hastily. Some years, you say, have passed, and we have had witnesses who were puzzled by the dress."

"The dress is very different from that which he wore when I last saw him, but the face is the same, and I still most solemnly swear to him."

The witness went down with no further question.

"I believe, my lord, I need not contend that the person who stole away the date of Sir Harry's death must be the same who charged him with the subsequent crime."

"That is for the jury's decision, and here is something to assist them. Amongst these relics recovered by the witness Daunt, are the identical articles referred to in the prisoner's letter to Mr. Seymour: a half-malted watch, a gold miniature case in the same state, and the fragment of a gold chain."

The proofs against Cheek had come too thickly to be warded off. He struggled for another protest,

but his words failed him, and he dropped down senseless. A long, low cry from pent-up agonies reverberated through every heart, and the multitude burst into another stunning shout. Proceedings were suspended for many minutes, during which the privileged company on the bench again crowded with congratulations and assistance around the unconscious Lucy, but no attempt could be made to carry her out, for there was no carriage and no one to send for it. Thus were they doomed to stay for the last exhibition that Cheek ever made at Lympston.

As soon as he recovered his senses, Lincoln intimated that his case was closed. Sergeant Heavyside, finding the truth too strong for him, retained his seat, and both of them declined to address the jury. Nothing remained but the judge's summing up, which, though he took infinite pains to prevent the murder actually committed from affecting the verdict on the one attempted—the only charge on trial—so protected the witnesses to the latter, that all doubts of their truth were completely dispelled. Cheek hardly appeared to listen, for all his faculties were lost, till he quivered at the word "Guilty," and reeled to and fro under the solemn preface to the sentence, which concluded with "Transportation for life."

Here Lincoln again rose with an appalling air of not yet having done his worst.

"My lord," he said, "I have now to mention a circumstance on which I forbore to question the

witness Daunt, under the impression that it was only necessary for your lordship's after-consideration. An information has been laid before the mayor and magistrates of Dover, that the prisoner did, at the date of the certificate we have produced, and at that place, commit a wilful murder upon John Downton ; and officers are now here with a warrant to take possession of him on that charge."

"Of course ; let them do so."

The horrors that had been accumulating over Cheek's head had now deepened into their darkest shadow. The last prospect in life had closed upon him, save one too terrible to look upon, and he was borne out in a state of despair, which none who saw it can ever hope to forget.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

AS Cheek was conveyed away the court cleared hastily to witness his final departure, and the bar rose up, and the judge bowed and took his leave. The sheriff and the lord-lieutenant and their friends again bowed their congratulations, and Lady Goldfield and Mary Lightfoot were nearly the last to think of moving, for they still supported Lucy, who, with closed eyes and clasped hands only knew that all was over when Lord Goldfield entered to receive the emphatic embrace of his mother. He came to tell her that Tom Philpot had brought the carriage, which they would follow on their horses; but that Mr. Bloomer and his kind friend, who had filled the place of Lucy, were too much exhausted for further exertion. Crowley had taken them to the inn, from which enough company was departing to leave them the best accommodation, and would bring them to Goldsworthy in the morning, when a night's rest had strengthened all parties for a blessed meeting.

They then assisted Lucy slowly to the court-

yard, where Tom could only whisper his joy as he handed them into the carriage, and through a storm of huzzas they were soon clear of the town.

Much of their way was passed in silence, for Lucy was more in a state for consolation than rejoicing, so mingled was the vindication of her father's name, with natural emotion at his now no longer doubted removal from all care for it. Had he but lived, she at length moaned—had her lost mother but lived—one day of restored prosperity to know that they did not leave her so very forlorn, how blest would any fate have been in all this world! What was now the recovery of all that they had lost but a never-ending reproach for possessing it in their stead? What could she do but re-unite them where neither would have sense of it! What poor return for so much love! What vain amends for so much misery!

"I will go!" she exclaimed more quickly. "I will not rest. I must bring the little that remains of him, and pray that his spirit may follow it. He shall be honoured in a tomb not nameless nor deserted. To-morrow—I will go to-morrow!"

"Hush, Lucy; you shall go—so will we all; but not till you have life to reach him. You must not leave to other hands an office so due from your own. You must be patient till you are better able to perform it, and sure that I will counsel no needless delay in what I would have done myself. You have no strength but in your heart, and must regain it by more calm reflection. Heaven knows,

my dear Lucy, how I loved my parents and my husband, but would I recall them if I could to a life, which however happy, must still be one of less perfection? Would I wish them to return for inevitable troubles and die a second death? If that were a right wish how could I have lived so long to feel it vain? The happier I lived with them the more happiness I am bound to find for others, or the less is my chance to be happy with them again. Think if there are not those whom unreflecting grief would wrong, even as it would wrong the memory of those whose example we reject. Remember the power which this day has placed in your hands, and do not imagine it has been placed there to purchase desolation for yourself, or despair for those who love you."

To follow faithfully the persuasive comforting of Lady Goldfield, would need her voice, her look, and other mystic influences, to be felt but not described. The loving attempts of Mary Lightfoot were lost in tearful admiration, for she had known through that long and eventful day what griefs of her own had been resisted to spare their infliction where there were already too many; she was aware of the last night's discoveries, and that whilst she was cheering Lucy through the long hours in the court, she was thinking them the last in which she was likely to appear as the mistress of Goldsworthy, and the last in which she would be seen by the friends who had admired and courted her for so many years. Even as they drove up to their so-

called home, not the least of her fears was whether Lady Goldfield really possessed one.

Lucy was taken to her room, where cautious nursing and gentle words succeeded by degrees in bringing her to a more resigned contemplation of her new position, and ere long her worn-out energies gave way, and she sank into a blessed sleep.

Lady Goldfield then left her to be watched over by her faithful companion, and descended to her son, and his no less faithful, Tom Philpot.

"Mother," said the former, meeting her with anxious affection. "You look sadly fatigued! The day has been too much for you."

"Then let us not talk of it—we have all of us too treacherous a path before us to be safe in looking back."

"Goldsworthy is safe, mother—Mr. Badger only accepted your commission to prevent you from placing it in other hands."

She listened with a look of great relief, and then turned to Tom, and said—"The news is welcome to me for more reasons than you think of. My agent here is a prosperous old man and has long wished to retire, and we owe you much that needs no mention. I am sorry that the office is not better worth your acceptance, but the present occupant has gained a fortune in it, and perhaps we may make it more valuable. You will not refuse me? You will never leave us?"

Tom was too much surprised to answer, and  
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looked from side to side for an explanation of this new turn of Fortune's wheel. Had his old calculations proved right, and were Cocker and Bonnycastle all wrong? Did pretty Polly's hundred a year when added to his own hundred and fifty, really amount to an income of sixteen hundred!

Lord Goldfield puzzled his arithmetic a great deal more. He saw immediately what service Lady Goldfield desired to acknowledge, and burst out, to evade the subject, that he, too, was in distress for an honest agent, and honest Tom was exactly the person to displace his present rogue at Tantara, who had been brought there by his intimate villain Cox.

Tom turned round and round again—Tantara was a princely place, and the addition it made to sixteen hundred would have confused the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"These new appointments," said Lady Goldfield, who had long been informed how far pretty Polly would be concerned in them, "remind me of another which was made by dear Lucy in her last words before she went to sleep—'Mary,' she murmured, 'Mary, the hapless Cheek is disposed of; Broome Warren needs a better manager, and I will take no recommendation but yours.'"

Tom's calculations were over! He would never make another! What his replies might have been we will not endeavour to repeat, for he did not know himself.

"And now, Harry," continued his mother, "you

begin to know that there are better roads to happiness than you found on the race-course."

"Mother, my dear mother, you shall judge from my first commission to my agent. Tom, I beseech you, hold yourself in readiness for a speedy visit to Tantara Castle—announce a great sale of thoroughbreds, and dispose of every cursed skeleton for whatever he will fetch."

"I have only one more word, Henry, before I follow my girls to rest. For what cause did you hurry so madly after Mr. Pinhorn?"

"To secure my bills, which he told us last night were in his possession. To prevent him from selling them at half price to his brother swindlers, and bringing I know not what troubles on the head of their lawful owner. I pursued him to his inn, and found him already packing up for London—the dread of another appearance in court made him strictly conscientious, and here I deliver them to Miss Longland's agent—to her, and to her only, are due my sixty per cent. compound interest."

"You give me hopes that you may still be a man of business. Good night, my son. Good night, Mr. Philpot. You had better apply for Broome Warren before Miss Lightfoot appoints some one else."

And thus the long dreaded day was brought to an end.

In the morning Lucy was more herself. The lamentations of last night were for a sorrow for which she had long been prepared, and it could not naturally have been so intense now had her loss

been certified at the time of its occurrence. There was something in the reflection which appealed to her reason and strengthened her efforts to descend and await the party from Lymp-ton.

It was not long before the hale jubilations of a noisy old gentleman announced their arrival, and the Vicar broke from the custody of Crowley and Mr. Badger to burst in and clasp his beloved niece. He was greatly renovated since his exhibition of the day before—his hair did not stand on end, his dress gave no hint of Bedlam, and his flush of triumph made him look at least twenty years younger.

"It is I that have done it all!" he cried. "Me that none of you believed! Me that you hunted in a straight waistcoat! Me that you advertised in the 'Hue and Cry!' Me with my wonderful memory of Roger Seymour! Here, take her, you Crowley, and tell her we've had tears enough. I've earned my right to give the first blessing all around me, and begin where it is most due." With which he turned to Lady Goldfield with terrifying compliments on her great penetration in having thought he might be so securely trusted in London, and from her to every one else with the boast of his travels in foreign lands, his perils on sea and shore, prisons, galleys, and captivity of the noblest woman in France!

"But where is that lady?" inquired every one, for next to himself she had been their greatest wonder.

Mr. Badger now found a moment to be heard, and

to tell them with much regret that Madame having considered her mission accomplished, had made up her mind to return home, that she might not be required to intrude where she was quite sure of feeling herself *de trop*. She had taken an affectionate leave of her *bon ange*, and was, by that time, far on her journey; rejoicing, no doubt, that she had contrived to steal away without her thousand pounds reward for the apprehension of that run-away *brave*.

Lady Goldfield was truly disappointed, and declared that since Madame would not come to see her, she should most certainly go to see Madame. Then observing that Lucy and Crowley had retreated to a blazing fire, and were casting papers into it as fast as Tom Philpot could hand them whilst Lord Goldfield was struggling and protesting and the rest were looking on; she spoke of the projected journey to Boulogne and its melancholy object, inviting Mr. Badger, as an old and valued friend of Sir Harry, to bear them company. A duty indispensable, he replied, and he would be there the first to make all needful arrangements.

We rest for three days, when the Vicar's good angel found she had not escaped, and received a visit which she never forgot. Before the month ended she had given up her business at Calais and changed her residence and society for a style which no one could account for.

By this leap of a month we pass over a gloomy procession, which, as it neared Broome Warren was

joined by sorrowing multitudes far greater than we witnessed at the never-forgotten assizes. It is too late in our history to describe it farther, and nothing is so pleasant in a midnight tunnel as the ray from the vista at its end.

And yet, we know not why it is, but we believe we are not singular in finding it more difficult to write of joy than of sorrow, just as the painter finds it easier to draw ill-favoured lineaments than the lines of beauty. Perhaps it is that sorrow is an old, familiar acquaintance, and joy—alas! But we must not chant a dirge to the accompaniment of wedding bells, of which we hear a faint sound in the distance; but stop to listen to its music.

We resume our pen for a few lighter historiettes, of which the foremost heroine must be sister Pen, premising that we had not heard of her for many weeks, when our principal group were enjoying a bright sunshine in Goldsworthy Park. On which occasion Neddy the Second was seen galloping towards them with Miss Pen's butler mounted on his tail. Mr. Sprat was bearing a dispatch from foreign parts, addressed by that lady to Miss Mary Lightfoot; and as he had received another for himself with the information that, being good for nothing, he might go about his business, he spared neither whip nor kick to transact a little with his other mistress. Making his way with his best jockeyship towards our group, of whom he judged Miss Polly must be one, he charged through them and pulled up a hundred yards beyond, from whence he re-

turned politely, apologizing for "this here jackass, that ain't got no mouth at all."

Accosting Polly, he delivered his dispatch from the post office, in his hat.

"If you please, mum, here's something from Miss 'Lopy, who has been and turned me off without no warning, and I wants a place."

A letter from the fond sister Pen at last,—the first since Polly had left her. She broke the seal, and found it dated from Amsterdam.

"MY DEAR SISTER,—

"I hope you will now be satisfied. After a long and heart-rending conviction that my devotion to you can meet with no return, I have determined to release you from further discomfort. The awful step is taken, and my designation is no longer spinster. I know not whether it is yet decorous to allude to such an event, but I lose no time in acquainting you that I was six weeks ago espoused to the best of men.

"I trust you will never know the misery of having wrecked all my earthly happiness, and that you will not afflict yourself with anxieties more than you can help, for I am, as yet, in the enjoyment of as much serene content as I think consistent with propriety. Having no further occasion for our late residence, I beg you will get rid of it as well as you can, and give Edward to that worthless boy, Sprat, as a liberal equivalent for his wages, unless you prefer keeping him for your own riding,

in which case you will please to alter his name to Reuben."

"She signs her own name," concluded Polly in great surprise. "There could be only one best man, and that was Neddy Fozzard."

"Ax your pardon, mum," said Sprat; "there's another as is better,—him as I made a Christian with a mess of pig's fry; a cousin of hern as we seed at Cheek's trial."

"And not a bad substitute either," agreed all.

"But how is this?" enquired Tom, who always liked Sprat because he liked Polly. "Do you say Miss Pen has turned you off?"

"Yes, Master Tom, neck and crop."

"Why, then, you must come and live with me."

"Thank'e, sir, all the same; but I should like to give Miss Polly fust choice."

"To be sure, Sprat," replied Polly, pleased with the compliment. "I could not spare you. Pack up everything belonging to me at the cottage, and do what you please with Edward."

"Thank'e, mum; I know what to do with him. I'll have all the things ready afore night. Good-bye, ma'am. Come up, you brute, and run away home."

With which Neddy resumed his acquaintance with Mr. Sprat's heels, and was exceedingly well disposed of on his way back for the sum of five shillings to an itinerant dealer in pots and pans.

As soon as the incessant calls of other visitors,

with every variety of compliment, and curiosity became sufficiently exhausted to permit an occasional drive, the first was directed to the Rosary, in which was found a very desirable revolution. Mrs. Toogood had surprised the neighbourhood and herself by adhering all that time to her resolution of leaving the world to shift for itself, and reserving all her good advice for private meditation. Society, which had reluctantly kept aloof from the grinding out of its flaws, very soon began to attach itself to her really estimable qualities; and she was not long in convincing herself that the best method of doing good was to do it rationally. The gratitude of Lucy for her long affection and now unneeded generosity—and, for her sake, of all at Goldsworthy—was shown in unremitting attention through the heavy months of winter, considered due to the memory of Sir Harry; and it was from the parterres of the Rosary that Crowley and Tom Philpot presented the first flowers of the spring to adorn two bridal chaplets.

Mrs. Bloomer comes next in rotation, and we are happy to say, as the Vicar was to hear, that having left Broome Warren the day after her distinguished assistance at the assizes, she became a leader of the *ton* at Rosherville, and celebrated as the better half of one of the happiest couples that ever parted.

Mrs. Whilk took precedence of all at Sea Cliff as a lady who bought instead of catching her fish, and never after shot a wild duck, though the frequent visits of her benefactors made it necessary to keep



a good house. Nelly, made perfectly independent, passed a few months with her, and only left for a happy marriage with a young custom-house officer, who raised her to a rank she well deserved. And Bunckle, having taken Father Matthew's pledge, was promoted to the command of a beautiful yacht, newly chartered for the summer dreams of we need not say what voyagers, with our little friend Tom for his first-lieutenant.

Dame Rokins was established in a capital farm, very near to the Chase, under the superintendence of pretty Susan, and the sweetheart to whom a slight but significant allusion was made by brother Jack in one of our early pages; whilst brother Jack's erratic education made him fit for everything, but nothing in particular.

Charming Betsy continued to enjoy the confidence of her mistress with much increased indulgence in consequence of her horrible abduction by Sergeant Anak, during which time she discovered the other sergeant who had rescued her to be her first cousin, and obtained leave to invite him to the Rosary at all meal times. She afterwards married Dr. Choke who declared Mrs. Choke's relative to be the best friend he had.

This is a long list, but we must not omit Mr. Fozzard, who was so unpopular after the fraudulent sale of the Chase, that his eminent principals were under the necessity of requesting his retirement. He afterwards employed his great literary talents in the begging letter business, till he inadvertently

made acquaintance with the police, from which time we regret to say we have completely lost sight of him.

Moses Pinhorn being, it is supposed, like his cousin, the late Sir Abraham, in doubt whether he is likely to change for the better, still lives in Dan Street, Beersheba Square, where he continues his correspondence, though nearly a hundred years old, with young officers of good prospects, who occasionally express their obligations to him in the Court of Bankruptcy: we likewise find mention of him sometimes by a misguided *Pater Familias* in the *Times* newspaper, with very irate denouncements. But *Pater Familias* may as well save his time and temper, for the rising philosophy of the day is all in favour of *Post Obits*, and Moses will be a thriving old gentleman till he goes into business somewhere else.

We have kept Aaron to the last, because we have been unwilling to weave a dark thread in what we have intended for a bright drop-scene, and because the end of his story seems to assist the moral which he has himself once or twice drawn in a passing word on the responsibility of masters for the conduct of dependents. After the trial at Maidstone, which needs no repulsive allusion, his powers of endurance, which had been strained to their utmost tension, gave way with a suddenness which proved his wondrous fortitude. He had been so injured by his daring exertions in Cheek's fire, that nothing but his single and determined purpose of atonement

seemed to have kept him alive. He had only succeeded with almost his last breath, and had barely enough to request his conveyance back to Broome Warren and a final word with Crowley and Lucy. His time was just long enough to see them and understand the allowance they made for his great wrongs, and the sorrow they felt for him when his mind wandered away about undeserved pardon, and babes and daisy chains, and left what he had done amiss to be answered for by those who had done worse.

We have never visited the Broome Warren country since the days of which we have given this history, but we hear it is now entirely reformed. The Chase is restored to its former beauty; the site of the mansion in Green Lane's End is no longer to be traced, and the vicarage and the church bear witness to the love that has been lavished on them. Here, on its grassy knoll, the resting-place of the ill-fated Lady Longland now bears an additional inscription to the memory of Sir Harry, who rests by her side; and here will be read other inscriptions in their turn, which we are thankful to say has not come yet.

And here we come to our terminus, and take the liberty of waking our fellow-traveller with whom we commenced this long journey, trusting, very sincerely, that he has enjoyed a pleasant repose.

THE END.

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